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Collaboration between student affairs and academic affairs: an exploratory study

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Collaboration Between Student Affairs and Academic Affairs: An Exploratory Study

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Significance of the Study

From its inception, higher education in America was elitist and strongly patterned in the British tradition (Rudolph, 1990; Caple, 1996; Ortiz & Langdon, 1997). Faculty lived with, taught and governed students. "The dormitory made it possible for the faculty to exercise supervision and parental concern for the well-being of the students" (Nuss, 1996, p. 24). Following the Civil War however, the emphasis began to change from teaching and the moral development of students to teaching and research due to the evolving needs of an evolving country.

The Morrill Act of 1862 created land grant institutions, which were designed to serve and educate the people. The second Morrill Act of 1890 created publicly funded institutions for Black students. Women's colleges also came into existence during this same period (Nuss, 1996; Rudolph, 1990). Higher education was changing from an elite institution to an institution for the people. Teacher responsibilities increased at this time. Simultaneously, graduate study and research was increasingly encouraged for those seeking to become professors.

Many candidates for the graduate degree received their training in Germany where the major focus was research grounded in the scientific method. Professors no longer had the time nor inclination to deal with students outside the classroom. In the Germanic system, "'pure' truth and 'pure' knowledge were the aim of all research and study" (Caple, 1996, p.194). This method was not student-focused as had been in earlier years (Nuss, 1996). Professors no longer had a major residential or governing connection with their students. The growing sentiment was that the major

relationship between professor and student should be retained within the four walls of the classroom (Ortiz & Langdon, 1997; Wolf-Wendel & Ruel, 1999).

This left a major gap in the traditional life of the student. In order to address the various out-of-classroom needs of students, university presidents appointed Deans of Men and later Deans of Women (National Association of Student Personnel Administrators [NASPA], 1987; Nuss, 1996). Thus began a dichotomy within the university that still exists today: student affairs and academic affairs. The purpose of this study is to examine an example of this type of collaboration between student affairs and academic affairs professionals.

Specializations developed over time to include the Student Affairs departments that exist today such as: Student housing, student health, academic advising, career advising, student activities, etc. Each area grew and developed its own expertise separate from the other (Caple, 1996). Each had its own view of the student that emphasized various student needs.

> Specialization, in turn has led to compartmentalization and fragmentation, often resulting in what is popularly described as *functional silos* or *mine shafts.* These vertical structures, though often effective at promoting interaction *within* [italics added] functional units, often create obstacles to interaction, coordination, and collaboration *between and among* [italics added] units (Schroeder, 1999b, p.9).

The Student Learning Project Work Group initiated by the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) conducted research examining faculty, student affairs and students' beliefs about what is central to

student learning. This group concluded that the very disparate beliefs about student learning that began so long ago still exist today.

Specifically, they found that for faculty:

> The curriculum and academic activities (teaching, studying) are the most important components of undergraduate learning....They [faculty] do not consider personal and social development to be central, a view that conflicts with statements of college goals in most institutional catalogues. In addition, faculty assume little or no responsibility for students and their learning beyond the classroom. Whatever undergraduates do or learn beyond formal academic settings is unrelated to the primary goals of the academy (Arnold & Kuh, 1999, p.16).

Student Affairs staff, on the other hand, value very different aspects of the undergraduate experience. While acknowledging the importance of the formal curriculum, student affairs professionals emphasized the co-curricular as equally valuable.

> What matters most to student affairs professionals is promoting student involvement in activities that are assumed to foster student development...Such activities as participating in student government, writing for the school paper, joining a special-interest club, and living in residence hall are considered vital to learning and development. By becoming active in the campus community, students benefit from the synergistic interplay among curricular, co-curricular, and residential

> experiences. Indeed, the experience of living with others is a sort of "learning laboratory" in which students increase both their self-knowledge and their ability to live and work within communities of diverse individuals (Arnold & Kuh, 1999, p.17-18).

Many student affairs professionals feel that the services they provide:

> help students take advantage of resources for learning and personal development...they are also settings where students acquire interpersonal and practical competence, skills not directly addressed in many classes and majors but which are necessary for success after college in the arenas of family and work (p.18).

Blake (1996) eloquently portrayed the different working philosophies of the two groups in saying that "While faculty are busy challenging students' beliefs about how the world operates and encouraging argumentation, people in student affairs are bolstering student morale and encouraging collaborative efforts" (p. 7).

As a result, many faculty and student affairs personnel feel that there is and has been a tension and lack of respect for what they do by their counterpart.

> Chief student affairs officers continue to lament the perceived lack of faculty interest in 'good' advisement, student development goals, and mentoring relationships beyond the classroom...Faculty on the other hand, decry the lack of student affairs staff commitment to the 'priorities' of quality teaching, faculty freedoms, and the classroom management concerns with which they often struggle (McAuliffe, Huskey & Buchanan, 1988, p. 54).

Another potential obstacle to collaboration between student and academic affairs is that the general personalities of the two groups are very different. People drawn to the field of student affairs typically enjoy the subjective aspects of life. Most of the time, their jobs involve counseling and accomplishing things through others. People drawn to the professoriate generally enjoy reason and proof. Most of the time, their jobs involve working with books and experiments and if they aren't socially oriented and are ill at ease with people they will still receive accolades for their work (Blake, 1996).

Even with the tension between student and academic affairs, some believe that the cause for the tension, the different viewpoints held by the two groups, can be the very strength of the collaboration (Price, 1999). Elizabeth Blake described the differences as Yin and Yang.

> One of the oldest and best representations of unity from balanced opposites is the circle formed by what the Chinese call the yin and yang...the interlocked halves are perceived as distinct but inseparable, necessary to each other to form the whole, each containing some elements of its opposite (Blake, 1996, p.4).

She suggests that the deep contrasts are necessary and even beneficial to creating a seamless environment. In this way, graduates go forth having received a rich, full and whole education and can apply their learning to the whole of their lives.

Although student and academic affairs may employ different methods, Ortiz and Langdon (1997) suggest that they have similar objectives and goals in mind. In their study they explored faculty members' values and goals as they relate to student

development. They found that, similar to the basic value tenets of the student affairs profession, faculty also would like to develop moral character, help students establish personal values, enhance students' self-understanding, and prepare them for responsible citizenship.

In another national study, faculty noted that developing critical thinking was their primary purpose. However, the majority of the 4,000 goals submitted were related to course content rather than the developmental skills they deemed so important (Gardiner, 1998). Therefore it is important for faculty and student affairs professionals to work together. Student affairs professionals can use their expertise in developing learning outcomes. They "can partner to help students recognize that their learning in the classroom is related to their out-of-class lives" (de la Teja & Kramer, 1999, p.94).

Many colleges and universities now focus on collaboration between academic and student affairs. "...College Student Affairs today may face the best opportunity since its beginning to integrate its efforts with the other parts of the educational system and thereby achieve a more authentic and meaningful learning experience for college students" (Caple, 1996, p. 193).

Researchers suggest that this type of collaborative effort is necessary to enhance the student learning experience (American Association for Higher Education, American College Personnel Association, and National Association for Student Personnel Administrators, 1998; Banta & Kuh, 1998; Hutchings, 1996; Schroeder, Minor, & Tarkow, 1999b). Stodt (1987) maintained that "both the academic and the student affairs domains of college life [are] essential to an

excellent education and to the kinds of satisfaction and support that would encourage students to persist through college" (p. 21).

Purpose of the Study

Charles Schroeder concluded: "although collaboration is easy to extol, it is difficult to achieve" (Schroeder, 1999a, p.1). However, the characteristics of collaborative relationships between student affairs and academic affairs are not adequately described in the literature. I will explore how one collaboration began, how the student and academic affairs professionals see their roles, what they learned throughout the process, what were some of the "rough edges" that were encountered, and what future directions and advice they give as a result of having gone through the process. Again, the purpose of this study is to examine collaboration between faculty and student affairs professionals.

Limitations of the Study

Like Baxter-Magolda (1992), I too felt as though my analysis could not be completely correct because it was a hybrid of stories and my own interpretation. But this is the liberty and even expectation of qualitative research. My hope is to retell the story I witnessed with some coherency and order. What I have is observation filtered through the lens of my own experiences, studies and biases. It is through that lens that I invite the reader to read, (through your own lens) my interpretation of the stories I uncovered/discovered during fieldwork of 2000-2001.

Thesis Organization

The literature review in Chapter 2 will examine further the two key concepts of--student learning and student (personal) development. Next, collaborations

between student and academic affairs and how they can enhance students' learning and personal development will be presented. Finally, an example of collaboration between student and academic affairs will be presented with information about how they worked toward achieving a common goal of enhancing student learning and student (personal) development. Chapter 3 describes the qualitative methodology used to answer the questions set forth for this study. Chapter 4 outlines findings and observations. Chapter 5 details conclusion on the topic, recommendations for practice, and some ideas for future studies.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Higher Education institutions in this country are being held accountable for the type and quality of students that they produce (Blimling, 1999; Flower, 1998; Mingle, 1998; Schroeder, 1999a). It is for this reason as well as the fact that faculty members simply want their students to learn that many are now focusing on improving student learning (Earle Chaffee, 1998). Concurrently, businesses want more well-rounded and well-equipped workers who not only know their disciplines, but also know how to communicate it to others (Cross, 1998; Gardiner, 1998; Wingspread Group, 1993). The recent discussion on improving the quality of undergraduate education has opened the door to discussion of improving student learning (Amey, 1999; Smith, 1988). Dr. David Potter, who in recent years chaired a national task force on Powerful Partnerships between student affairs and academic affairs concluded that learning should be the measure of quality in undergraduate education (Potter, 1999).

"Two primary challenges in higher education today are to meet the public's demand for maximizing students learning, and to be more accountable for what students learn" (Lenning and Ebbers, 1999, p. 1). Pursuit of this outcome has resulted in more partnerships and collaborations. Collaboration is required "when the job they [universities] face is too big, is too urgent, or requires too much knowledge for one person or group to do alone" (AAHE, ACPA, NASPA, 1998). These are just the types of partnerships that institutions of higher education recently have been forging to better serve its students.

For the purposes of this review of literature, I will first, define what learning and personal development means within the context of higher education. Second, I will explore the differences and similarities between student learning and development. Third, I will list some of the benefits of enhanced student learning and personal development for students. Fourth, I will explore how collaboration can contribute to student learning and personal development. Finally, I will examine in depth one example of collaboration whose purpose is to enhance student learning and personal development—Learning Communities.

Definitions of Student Learning and Development

Student Learning Defined

A modified version of Kimble's original definition, Hergenhahn and Olson define learning as "a relatively permanent change in behavior or in behavior potentiality that results from experience and cannot be attributed to temporary body states such as those induced by illness, fatigue, or drugs" (1997, p. 6). Two terms that should be highlighted in this definition are behavior and experience.

Behavior

Many scientists believe that the process of learning cannot be studied directly (Hergenhahn and Olson, 1997). Instead, changes in behavior are indexed in an attempt to make inferences about the learning that occurred. For example, many professors give final examinations at the end of the school year to determine if the students have mastered the material taught.

Experience

Experience is another important concept in this definition. King and Baxter-Magolda's (1996) discussion reflects the importance of experience in the study of learning. The study of learning is "a way of organizing what and how people come to know...people actively interpret their life experiences in an attempt to learn from them" (p.165). Learning involves an active construction of experiences by the learner (King, 1996).

Student learning then is defined by experiences (or acquisition of knowledge) (Kuh, Schuh, & Whitt et al., 1991) that result in behavior change or the potential for behavior to change while enrolled in an institution of higher education. Within higher education, students receive formal learning. Formal learning is a specialized type of learning that occurs within an educational setting. The content is specifically chosen and organized around a subject to promote learning. In addition, formal learning is deductive in nature in that the goal of it is to go from "known experiences to generalized concepts" (Blake, 1996, p.6).

Student Development Defined

Student development differs somewhat from human development. "Human development theories assume there is some goal or end point toward which the adult moves, and that this end point is potentially 'better' or more mature than what is seen at earlier ages" (Bee, 1996, p.53). Student development is more circumscribed and is "the application of human development concepts in postsecondary settings so that everyone involved can master increasingly complex developmental tasks, achieve self-direction, and become interdependent" (Miller &

Prince, 1976, p. 3). Evans, Forney, and Guido-DiBrito (1998) quote Rodgers' definition of student development as "the ways that a student grows, progresses, or increases his or her developmental capabilities as a result of enrollment in an institution of higher education" (p. 4).

Student development describes the complex internal and thought pattern changes that occur as a result of experience. Student development could be defined as a change or potential for positive change in complex reasoning skills as a result of experience. In general, the goals for student development are to enhance students':

1. Intellectual development
2. Critical thinking skills
3. Problem-solving through principled reasoning
4. Interpersonal and social skills
5. Liberal or democratic values
6. Self-esteem
7. Knowledge of our cultural heritage
8. Tolerance of differing opinions
9. Broad perspectives

(Creamer, 1989)

Differences Between Student Learning and Student Development

Although closely related, one distinction between student learning and student development is that student learning involves the acquisition of knowledge with the potential for external (behavioral) change, and student development focuses on the potential for internal (e.g. complex reasoning) change. Many times, the internal changes are in how one thinks or feels about oneself and the world around them (Creamer, 1989). The internal changes are largely affective, and traditionally have involved *out-of-classroom* experiences within the context of higher education.

Student learning refers often but not solely to experiences that are *within* the classroom that result in the potential for behavioral change. Since the early 20th century, the out-of-classroom learning has been the domain of student affairs administrators. While students' in-class experiences have been the domain of academic affairs administrators and faculty (Arnold & Kuh, 1999; Caple, 1996).

Similarities Between Student Learning and Student Development

A presumed dichotomy between student learning and student development within the context of higher education is a reflection of the historical dichotomy between student and academic affairs. However, a collaborative effort between student and academic affairs personnel resulting in the document "Powerful Partnerships" assert that learning and development are *not* separate, but rather, learning *is* developmental. The document states that:

- Any single learning experience or instructional method has a lesser impact than the overall educational experience
- Curricula should be additive and cumulative, building upon prior understandings and knowledge toward greater richness and complexity
- Intellectual growth is gradual, with periods of rapid advancement followed by time for consolidation, an extended and episodic process of mutually reinforcing experiences
- The goals of undergraduate education should include students' development of an integrated sense of identity, characterized by high self-esteem and personal integrity that extends beyond the individual to the larger community and world
- Assessment of learning should encompass all aspects of the educational experience
  (AAHE, ACPA, & NASPA, 1998, p. 10)

Learning, as in life, should not be compartmentalized to cognitive outcomes: "Gains in various kinds of substantive knowledge and in cognitive competence may provide both a basis and the intellectual tools for students to examine their own

identities, self-concepts, and the nature of their interactions with their external world" (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1996, p. 249). Rather, learning should encompass affective as well as cognitive outcomes (ACPA, 1994; Astin, 1996; Banta & Kuh, 1998; Baxter Magolda, 1999; King & Baxter Magolda, 1996; Terenzini, Pascarella & Blimling, 1996).

> The concepts of 'learning', personal development, and 'student development', are inextricably intertwined and inseparable. Higher education traditionally has organized its activities into 'academic affairs' and 'student affairs'. However this dichotomy has little relevance to post-college life, where the quality of one's job performance, family life, and community activities are all highly dependent on cognitive *and* [italics added] affective skills. (ACPA, 1994, p. 2)

Separating learning and development is like trying to pick fabric apart from a tight and intricately woven pattern or design. It is difficult to do and is certainly not as strong or beautiful apart as it was intertwined. "Development is enhanced when students, faculty members, and student affairs practitioners work collaboratively to promote the continuous development of all" (Miller & Prince, 1976, p. 6). When students are exposed to a seamless learning environment where the in-class and out-of-class activities are intertwined, student learning and personal development are maximized (Ortiz & Langdon, 1997). Even more, 2/3 of nearly any given week in the student experience is spent outside the classroom. Only 1/3 of the students' working hours are spent in class and studying. If more of that out-of-class experience could be devoted to educationally purposeful activities then the

opportunity for enhanced learning and development is increased. Even so, studies indicate that those students that do participate in purposeful in and out-of-class activities gain more from the college experience and frequently cite the out-of-class activities as having a positive impact on their lives (Kuh, Schuh, & Whitt et al., 1991). This integrated perspective of learning and development guides the focus of this study.

Benefits of Student Learning and Personal Development

What does enhanced student learning and personal development mean for the student experience? What *is* known is that far too many students do not have a good experience in higher education. Over 40 % of all students that enroll in higher education in the United States do not complete their degrees. Of those students that enroll in four-year institutions, *57 %* leave before the beginning of their *second year* (Tinto, 1996). These low retention rates are due to a wide variety of reasons, and cannot be attributed solely to a failure of the institution to promote student learning and personal development. Nonetheless, many of the major reasons why students leave can be alleviated through programs that promote student learning and personal development.

The most prominent reasons why students withdraw are:

1) Academic difficulty—Some students are poorly prepared and cannot or will not meet the minimum standards for academic eligibility.

2) Adjustment difficulties—It is extremely difficult for some students to "find their niche" and make a smooth social transition to college.

3) Goals: uncertain, narrow or new—For some students, going to college may almost be a 'knee jerk' reaction to the question of what to do after high school. The goals for college may yet be uncertain for a period of time. Or, students that did have some idea of a career plan may find that their life goals have changed direction and they have discovered a new passion to pursue.

4) Commitments: weak and external—Not all students possess the commitment necessary to complete the degree. However, there are some students that stop-out for a short period of time for external reasons such as: a sick loved one at home, divorce in the family, childbirth, help with the family farm or business, etc. These students generally return once the problem is under control.

5) Financial inadequacies—Many students cite a lack of money to handle tuition, housing and living expenses as a reason to leave college.

6) Incongruence—Some students arrive at their college of choice only to find that it does not feel as though the institution is the "right fit" for them. Underlying these reasons may be a feeling that there is a lack of concern for student needs, a poorly designed academic program, or that they are unchallenged academically.

7) Isolation—Some students leave simply because they are lonely and feel unable to connect with peers, staff or faculty. They don't have a sense of membership to the institution (Tinto, 1996).

To meet students' needs, change must occur first within the institution. Integration of the in- and out-of-class activities is central to enhanced student learning and personal development. This is based on the findings that "much or most of students' learning must occur outside of formal class periods" (Gardiner, 1998, p. 77). In order for this type of integration to take place, the student must be very involved in the educational process. Involvement refers to "the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience" (Astin, 1984, p. 297). When students are highly involved in the learning process, as the 'Powerful Partnerships' statement illustrates, students are able to:

1) Transfer prior knowledge and experience into new and deeper understandings
2) Develop an integrated sense of identity
3) Appreciate human differences
4) Meet high but achievable standards
5) Take risks and learn from mistakes
6) Constructively criticize someone's work
7) Actively problem solve using applied concepts

(AAHE, ACPA, NASPA, 1998)

The Benefit of Collaboration to Student Learning and Personal Development

The point at which cognitive and affective intersect is the terrain at which academic and student affairs should collaborate. "When colleges exist to provide learning, however, everyone who works with students has the responsibility and the

obligation to foster learning and so to be involved in the core purpose of their enterprise" (Andreas & Schuh, 1999, p.7). According to Hartup & Rubin (1986), collaboration is: "feelings of shared commitment to reaching some goal. A relationship of colleagues or partners, usually accompanied by a sense of mutual respect" (p.96-97). Specifically, 'the shared commitment', goal or vision should be toward enhancing student learning and development (Kuh, 1996; Price, 1999; Schroeder, 1999b).

"Collaborations between academic and student affairs personnel and organizations have been especially effective in achieving this better learning for students. We advocate these partnerships as the best way to realize fully the benefits of [enhanced learning] (AAHE, ACPA & NASPA, 1998, p. 1).

The existence of collaborative relationships between student and academic affairs has been well documented (Banta & Kuh, 1998; Chickering & O'Connor, 1996; King, 1993; Larrey & Estanek, 1999; McAuliffe, Huskey & Buchanan, N.L, 1988; Schroeder, 1999b; Schroeder, Minor, & Tarkow, 1999a; Westfall, 1999). The need or recognition that each can contribute to the other has been acknowledged (Andreas & Schuh, 1999; Jacoby, 1999; Kuh, 1996; Kuh, Schuh & Whitt, et al., 1991; Ortiz & Langdon, 1997; Schroeder, 1999b; Smith, 1988).

For example, in 1989-90, a task force of faculty, student affairs administrators and library personnel at George Mason University were appointed by the institution's president to conceptualize a university-wide center to promote "educationally purposeful activities outside the classroom" (Chickering & O'Connor, 1996, p.16).

The George Johnson University Center was developed out of the growing awareness that student learning is enhanced not only through better teaching methods, but through connecting classroom concepts to practical experiences outside the classroom. Partnerships such as these were also highlighted in the Student Learning Imperative (SLI) developed by the American College Personnel Association (ACPA, 1994).

The SLI asserted that, "the recent focus...is a clarion call to re-examine the philosophical tenets that guide the professional practice of student affairs and to form partnerships with students, faculty, academic administrators, and others to help all students attain high levels of learning and personal development" (ACPA, 1994, p.1).

These partnerships promise to enhance student learning. Pat Hutchings (1996) also recognized a need for more partnerships, collaboration and conversation between student and academic affairs. She noted that as faculty,

> ...Our students...pay a price, since we're in a poor position to help them make connections among their various in- and out-of-class educational experiences when we ourselves see so small a piece of their educational world. More conversation, among a wider group of individuals, would be a good step forward (p. 5).

Many studies indicate that students' involvement with faculty outside the classroom has a positive impact on the student experience (Astin, 1996; Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991; Terenzini et al., 1996; Tinto, 1998; Whitt and Miller, 1999).

Astin (1996) states that "the problem with leaving such matters undiscussed is that academics, left to their own devices, will usually take refuge in 'cognitive' outcomes like knowledge, cognitive skills, critical thinking, and so on" (Astin, 1996, p. 124).

King and Baxter Magolda state "student affairs educators can make a substantive contribution to student learning...by creating intentional support systems to bridge gaps between students' current experience and the meaning making needed for effective citizenship..." (1996, p. 172).

Hutchings (1996), Astin (1996) and King and Baxter Magolda (1999) all imply that each group, student and academic affairs, bring their own set of mastery skills, and unique ways in which they enhance student learning. They suggest that these different backgrounds complement one another and meet a need that would otherwise go unmet if they continued to work independently. In order to work together, "faculty and student affairs staff [need to] identify and acknowledge their differing assumptions, values, and beliefs, and work together to find a shared vision of student learning, and what matters in undergraduate education" (Arnold & Kuh, 1999, p. 33).

Student affairs professionals, as reflected in much recent literature, (King & Baxter Magolda, 1996; Kuh, 1996; Terenzini, Pascarella, & Blimling, 1996) need to work *with* faculty members to create a 'seamless' learning environment where connections are made between in and out-of-class experiences to become one learning experience (ACPA, 1994). In this way, student affairs professionals merge their expertise in creating environments and experiences that enhance personal development with faculty member's abilities to facilitate positive cognitive outcomes

to create a fusion that enhances learning while promoting the development of one's self. "Individuals are more likely to persist when they are either academically or socially integrated and even more likely to persist when both forms of integration occur...evidence suggests that academic and social integration are more important to persistence in the four-year institutions than in the two-year ones" (Tinto, 1998, p. 168).

This merger of the in and out-of-class activities promotes a sense of lifelong learning and removes the constraints of only learning in the classroom, to a life full of learning. These types of bridges enhance student learning and development, and as Angelo (1997) projected,

> We'll need better collaboration than we can currently muster to survive coming political and financial shocks. In the biggest of big pictures, if we're to cope with our planet's increasingly complex problems, we must educate highly effective teamworkers capable of making connections across all kinds of boundaries (p. 4).

That is, better collaboration between student and academic affairs persons will encourage and provide examples for students to make academic and social connections both during their baccalaureate career and once they find employment. Society and business need these types of well-rounded individuals. The public cry is for our society to advance. In order to accomplish that, higher education must produce students who can not simply learn a concept and perform it well, but one who can take leadership, problem solve and communicate well with others (Gardiner, 1998).

No one faction of the university can achieve these goals alone. Rather, higher education has formed partnerships and collaborations to achieve its goals (de la Teja and Kramer, 1999).

> This partnership requires a shared vision of the enterprise—what the institution's mission is, who its students are, what sort of education the students should have, what behaviors ought to be expected of students, and what qualities characterize a healthy and effective academic community. Moreover...the only way to obtain a shared vision is to spend time discussing it and, most importantly to recognize that both student and academic affairs have talents and expertise that the other could benefit from for the enhancement of the student experience.
>
> (Kuh, Schuh, and Whitt, et al., 1991, p. 350-351).

This shared vision is realized in programs in colleges and universities across the nation that has made significant changes in how institutions help students learn—Learning Communities.

Learning Communities

" Today many campuses...especially large public universities—are characterized by a constellation of independent principalities and fiefdoms each disconnected from the others and from any common institutional purpose or transcending value" (Schroeder, 1999a, p. 3).

Learning communities are a way to begin educational reform in higher education.

> Fortunately, a small but growing number of colleges and universities have begun to turn their attention to the task of educational reform in the first year. They have sought to alter the settings, classrooms, and laboratory experiences in which education occurs. Among these reforms, one of the most promising, in my view is the creation of 'learning communities' for new college students (Tinto, 1996, p. 4).

What students learn through learning communities is not compartmentalized into separate, isolated experiences, as has been the case traditionally in higher education. Rather, students have the benefit of being able to make connections garnering deeper learning and understanding. Through learning communities, students are active participants in the learning process (Tinto, 1996, 1997, 1999).

Definition of Learning Communities

Although learning communities are not a new concept, many programs across the country are still in their infancy (Tinto, 1999). Much of the literature on learning communities define them as two or more linked courses across disciplines (Gabelnick, et al., 1990; Shapiro and Levine, 1999; Smith, 1993). The linked courses can last anywhere from one to multiple semesters. The programs can be residential based where a group of students live in the same dormitory or they can simply be course- based. Nevertheless, many learning communities are organized around a theme (Cross, 1998; Gabelnick, et al., 1990; Levine, Smith, Tinto & Gardner, 1999; Shapiro & Levine, 1999; Tinto, 1996, 1997).

However, Alexander Astin defines learning communities somewhat more broadly. In his definition, learning communities are:

> subgroupings of students...characterized by a common sense of purpose. Such communities can be organized along curricular lines, common career interests, avocational interests, residential living areas, and so on. These can be used to build a sense of group identity, cohesiveness, and uniqueness; to encourage continuity and the integration of diverse curricular and co-curricular experiences; and to counteract the isolation that many students feel." (1985, p. 161)

For example, in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Iowa State University, one learning community is centered on the theme "Searching for One's Self". The linked courses in this community are English 104 and Psychology 101. Together they explore issues such as self-identity, wellness, individual learning styles, critical thinking, personal choices and social influences. In communities like these, faculty members work together to create meaningful, seamless learning experiences. Many learning communities link other discipline-based courses with English courses. The English courses then base many of their writing assignments on what is being learned in the other courses and likewise (Iowa State University, 1999).

Benefits of Learning Communities for Students

Students enrolled in learning communities tend to be much more satisfied with their educational experience and as a result are more likely to be retained (Tinto, 1996). "The structure of learning communities for first-year students encourages the two separate fiefdoms of faculty and student services to work closely with one another in constructing a first-semester curriculum tailored for new

students" (Tinto, 1997, p. 55-56). The attraction to learning communities for faculty and staff is a reflection of the yearning for a more holistic approach to higher education and a seamless experience for undergraduates (Cross, 1998). The interest can be divided into three categories: "*Philosophical* (because learning communities fit into a changing philosophy of knowledge), *research based* (because learning communities fit with what research tells us about learning), and *pragmatic* (because learning communities work)" (Cross, 1998, p. 4).

Learning Communities meet the learning needs of undergraduate students in many ways. First, students are more actively involved with classroom learning. They spend more time learning and as a consequence learn more (Gardiner, 1998; Tinto, 1996, 1997, 1999). For example, learning communities provide a seamless learning environment where coordinated out-of-classroom activities correspond to and can directly apply to material learned in the classroom. Overall learning experiences are therefore extended and enhanced.

Second, students spend more time in learning activities with their peers. Extended learning outside of the classroom often involves collaborative or cooperative learning experiences with peers. Learning with peers is shown to be some of the most significant learning in the student experience (Astin, 1984; Tinto, 1996, 1997, 1999).

Third, the learning community becomes an automatic social group for students to identify with, thus forming bonds and relationships that increase persistence in college (Tinto, Goodsell-Love & Russo, 1993; Tinto, 1996, 1997, 1999). Learning communities, are often a cohort of students enrolled in a class-

based or residential program. "These types of "experiences, academic and social, which serve to integrate the individual into the life of college, also serve to heighten attachments and therefore strengthen individual commitments both to the goal of education and to the institution" (Tinto, 1994, p.5)

Fourth, learning communities encourage students to make the connection between in-and out-of-class activities to experience a seamless education (Tinto, 1996, 1997, 1999). For example, many learning communities have introduced a service-learning component to their curriculum. Service-learning is "a pedagogical strategy, an inductive approach to education, grounded in the assumption that thoughtfully organized experience is the foundation for learning" (Tinto, 1999, p. 5). Service-learning provides an experiential learning avenue through which students can apply what they learn in-class.

Fifth, learning communities also require the partnership of student and academic affairs to pool their expertise to create a seamless learning environment for students (Levine, Smith, Tinto, & Gardner, 1999; Tinto, 1996, 1999).

> To be effective...learning communities require their 'faculty', that is the academic *and* [italics added] student affairs professionals who staff the learning community, to collaborate on both the content and pedagogy of the linked courses. They have to work together, as equal partners, to ensure that the linked courses provide a coherent shared learning experience (Tinto, 1999, p. 6).

Finally, learning communities enable students to experience learning comprehensively instead of taking in knowledge through a narrow lens, since

students are better able to see the world and their disciplines through a broader lens. These connections are often coupled with experiences as they apply outside of the classroom (Levine, Smith, Tinto, & Gardner, 1999).

Increasingly, institutions are discovering through programs like learning communities that, "improving the quality of the undergraduate experience at any institution is so complex and multifaceted that it demands cooperation by the two groups on campus that spend the most time with students, faculty members and student affairs professionals" (Banta & Kuh, 1998, p. 42). The purpose of this study is to examine collaboration between the two entities that spend the most time with students: student and academic affairs personnel as they work together in a learning community environment. In Chapter 3—Methods, I will outline in detail the research methods used.

CHAPTER 3. METHODS

Discussion of Qualitative Methods

The qualitative approach is the optimal choice in seeking to examine collaboration between student and academic affairs. Five special qualities of qualitative research have helped me to get a better understanding of my particular research problem. First, this study is exploratory and evolutionary in nature due to the fact that the qualities and characteristics of the relationship under study have not yet been well-documented (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Second, this particular problem statement requires a research method such as qualitative research that values context and setting as an important source of information (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). The specific context and setting of learning communities require a commitment to and focus on a common goal between student and academic affairs.

Third, participants' perspectives are essential to answer the problem statement. "In a qualitative study, you are interested not only in the physical events and behavior that is taking place, but also in how the participants in your study make sense of this and how their understandings influence their behavior" (Maxwell, 1996b, p. 17). This type of search for meaning or *Verstehen* (understanding) is key for this study (Schwandt, 1998). This is due to the exploratory nature of the study and the fact that the direction of the study involves learning how both the academic and student affairs resource persons make sense of their collaborative efforts (this will be outlined at length in Appendix C--Data Gathering Instruments). Schutz' maintained (as cited in Schwandt, 1998) that *Verstehen* is a way in which we make sense of our world and everyday actions.

> The observational field of the social scientist—social reality—has a specific meaning and relevance structure for the human beings living, acting, and thinking within it...It is these thought objects of theirs which determine their behavior by motivating it.
>
> (p. 227)

The constructs of the qualitative researcher then are founded upon the social constructs of respondents. Thus, creating constructs of the second degree, "constructs of the constructs made by actors on the social scene" (p. 227). Therefore, the understanding that I have gathered from this study was derived from the way the participants made sense of their collaboration and the socially constructed issues that accompanied it.

Fourth, to increase understanding, this research delved into complexities and processes (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). This occurred through delving into how the collaboration began, not simply through a top-down, administrative mandate, but rather, how the staff themselves proceeded to establish and maintain the learning community. The study also sought to discover the staff's personal evaluation of their accomplishments.

> The openness of qualitative inquiry allows the researcher to approach the inherent complexity of [this particular] social interaction and to do justice to that complexity, to respect it in its own right...Throughout the research process, [the researcher] assume[s] that social interaction is complex and that they will uncover some of that complexity
>
> (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 7).

Finally, qualitative research lends itself to the exploratory nature of the given study as relevant variables had not yet been identified (Maxwell, 1996a).

Design of Study

A case study approach to this study was the most judicious choice. Case studies in general "involve systematically gathering enough information about a particular person, social setting, event, or group to permit the researcher to effectively understand how it operates or functions" (Berg, 1998, p.212). The case study approach was used as I studied one instance of collaboration between academic and student affairs resource persons to better understand how they work closely with one another on a common goal. The nature of qualitative study helped to provide meaning to the situations, actions and intentions of the participants in the study. Causal explanations could be made for the phenomenon, and influence of the context in which the participants act, and the process by which actions are made (Maxwell, 1996a).

Site Selection

Learning communities were found by the Study Group on the Conditions of Excellence in American Higher Education to be especially necessary for large universities to strengthen "opportunities for intellectual dialogue and other forms of active learning" (1984, p. 33). The site chosen was a learning community in a college that has an emphasis on design and the arts at Midwestern University. [1]

[1] To ensure the anonymity of all the respondents, pseudonyms have been used and any identifying factors in the quotes and passages replaced by a general descriptor.

This site was chosen for several reasons. First, within this learning community, both academic affairs and student affairs professionals work collaboratively to ensure the success of the program. Second, I had a pre-existing relationship with the Associate Dean, who is also a faculty member in the Art and Design Learning Community. We had several opportunities to converse about a shared interest in learning communities and student retention.

The Associate Dean also acted as a gatekeeper to the desired research site. This relationship may prove to be beneficial in that access and entry to the site may be gained much easier (LeCompte & Preissle, 1994). I also had a pre-existing professional relationship with a student affairs staff member in the Art and Design Learning Community. This pre-established rapport was beneficial. As Glesne & Peshkin (1992) asserted, "people will talk more willingly about personal or sensitive issues once they know you" (p. 97). Also, recognizing that that some information could be disclosed in a friendly conversation, I emphasized at the beginning of the interview that I played a dual role as researcher and colleague and that if they wished to keep a particular matter private, they could preface what they said with the appropriate cautionary statement.

Site Description

When the Art and Design Learning Community began, rooms were reserved for 50 first-year students housed in two co-educational residence halls, one for 25 men and one for 25 women. However, the rooms of design students were incorporated with rooms housing students from other disciplines within the university. This allowed students to interact with students within their discipline but

also gave them the freedom to interact with students across various disciplines. Students continue to be admitted on a first come, first served basis. Since its inception, the Art and Design Learning Community has expanded to accommodate more than 125 students housed in two residence halls.

Unlike many other learning communities described earlier by Levine et. al (1999), these students do not share a common block of discipline specific classes. However, the course is a one-credit, two section course that is designed to help students; become aware of university and city community resources, acquire skills and strategies of successful design students, understand the value of interdisciplinary collaboration and diverse perspectives, and affirm their choice of major and/or become aware of other options. Students in each section live on reserved floors in two residence halls and share computer lab and studio space and have regular contact with live-in, design upper class, Peer Mentors. The Peer Mentors facilitate special personal development programs for students including sessions on study skills and serve as an intermediary between the students and staff members.

Data Collection

I chose three major sources of data to better understand the collaboration. (I will discuss these more in subsequent sections): First, I conducted interviews with the faculty and student affairs resource persons. Second, I observed the learning community staff meetings and classes in each section. Third, I reviewed pertinent documents (e.g. syllabi, memos, letters, e-mails, etc.) to get a better understanding of the collaboration. I chose to triangulate my methods to "reduc[e] the risk that [my]

conclusions will reflect only the systematic biases or limitations of a specific method" (Maxwell, 1996a, p. 75).

Interviewing

Interviewing was an appropriate method to better understand the given problem statement. Interviews, as described by Glesne & Peshkin (1992) are a good "opportunity to learn about what you cannot see and to explore alternative explanations of what you do see"(p. 65). These interviews yielded information concerning:

- How the collaboration occurred; how the faculty and student affairs staff view their roles in the learning community
- The process of beginning in, or continuing in the learning community; faculty and staff evaluation of the learning community
- What they believe the outcomes of the collaboration were for students; and how they would advise others in this process (the questions are outlined in detail in Appendix D—Sample Interview Questions).

Observations

To assure that the interview questions appropriately addressed the audience and led to a better understanding of the phenomenon of collaboration, the questions were accompanied with participant observation to allow the opportunity to "derive some questions from sheer fortuity" (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 71). For example, there were questions derived through insights gained during the interview process that had not been previously considered. "The main outcome of participant observation is to understand the research setting, its participants, and their behavior"

(p. 42). Observation of how the student and academic affairs resource persons interacted helped to triangulate and check my findings from the individual interviews. Observation of the student and academic affairs interaction also gave me a better understanding of the various facets of the collaboration.

In all cases of participant observation, or, the process by which, "the researcher carefully, systematically experiences and consciously records in detail the many aspects of a situation," it is important that one "makes the familiar strange" (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 42). That is, one should not remain comfortable or satisfied with one dominant way of thinking. One should, however, continuously be flexible and open to new ideas and ways of understanding (p. 42). This was especially adhered to in light of the preexisting relationships with the faculty and student affairs resource persons. I continuously asked myself whether I was observing all there is to observe, whether I was portraying the situation accurately and I made every effort to be conscious and aware of new ways of thinking about the situation. I observed the ongoing planning and developmental sessions and the on-site interaction from January to March. I interviewed faculty and student affairs resource persons during Spring 2000, Fall 2000 and Spring 2001. To supplement my experience, I created a graduate assistant position at the Teaching and Learning Center for two years, the agent that served as a base for the Learning Communities movement on campus. I participated on the university-wide Learning Communities Committee for one year. I also attended informational sessions presented by members of the Art and Design Learning Community staff about their experiences for the university community during a university institute both in 2000 and 2001.

Document Review

Documents "enrich what you see and hear by supporting, expanding, and challenging your portrayals and perceptions" (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). The data that I gathered from the interviews and observation helped me get a picture of the collaboration from a different angle. I compared what I learned through document review to the data gathered through interviews and observation. Documents such as relevant e-mail, memos, assessment summaries, faculty reports and published papers were used. "Much of the significance and interest in documents is revealed when they are considered in relation to each other. We develop our understanding of the ideas, issues and policies with which documents deal through a comparative analysis" (Blaxter, Hughes, & Tight, 1996, p. 187).

Data Analysis

It is important in a qualitative study to predetermine methods of data analysis (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). To do this, I used analytic files and coding schemes. First, to ensure that data from the interviews, focus groups, observation and document analysis are organized systematically, I chose to use analytic files. The specific files that were used are: subjectivity, titles, files related to the introduction and conclusion, and a quotation file (p. 129). Second, coding is another method that helped me make meaning of my findings. Coding the data allowed me to examine what I found to determine major themes from the data. As I extracted an incident into a code, I also compared that incident with other incidents and findings within that code and category thus applying the constant comparative method as outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

Establishing Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in a qualitative study in essence describes the ability for one's audience and colleagues to feel as though the research data, interpretations, and conclusions are accurate (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Therefore, to ensure the trustworthiness of my study, I used the trustworthiness criteria and respective strategies outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985): credibility (prolonged engagement and persistent observation), triangulation, member checking, peer debriefing and negative case analysis, transferability (thick descriptive data), dependability and confirmability (audit trail).

Credibility (Prolonged Engagement and Persistent Observation)

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) prolonged engagement "also requires that the investigator be involved with a site sufficiently long enough to detect and take account of distortions that might otherwise creep into the data" (p. 302). It was important to spend a sufficient amount of time in the field in order to build trust with the respondents that I did not have a pre-existing relationship with. When the respondents felt as though they could trust me, that "their confidences will not be used against them", they provided richer accounts of their experiences (p. 303). To comply with this, I spent time observing interaction during periods of collaboration: in the classroom, during lab time, in staff meetings and in interviews. Also, I met informally with the staff and peer advisors prior to beginning the study at a dinner held by the then Associate Dean at his home. Through this prolonged engagement, I persistently observed any phenomenon that was salient (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). Field research occurred January 2000 through January 2001.

Methods of Triangulation

Triangulation, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985) is a way "of improving the probability that findings and interpretations will be found credible" (p. 305). Triangulation employs the use of several sources and methods of collecting information (p. 305). In order to use several sources and methods, I used interviews, document review, and observation to gather data.

Member Checking

I will employ member checking to ensure that I represent my respondents as accurately as possible (Maxwell, 1996a). In order to do this, I will ask key respondents to read what I deduced from the information gathered prior to my thesis submittal to clarify any mistaken or unclear points.

Peer Debriefing

In addition, I engaged in peer debriefing with another researcher familiar with qualitative methods in order to make as certain as possible that there are no questions about my subject or process that I have not probed (Lincoln & Guba 1985). I have chosen a classmate and colleague to debrief my work. She has taken the classes necessary to be qualified for this position: Research and Evaluation 550 and Historical, Philosophical, and Comparative Studies in Education 580. This student has already completed a qualitative thesis on the topic of learning communities.

Negative Case Analysis

As I believe I have found major insights in my data, I consistently looked for instances that do not fit with my analysis. This will ensure that I have done a thorough search and analysis of my data (Lincoln & Guba, 1986).

Transferability

I will clearly communicate my findings using thick description. The context and setting of each finding will be plainly made known to my readers. In this way, those faculty and student affairs resource persons who discover my findings will have a context to determine if the material presented can be related to their own situation (Lincoln & Guba, 1986).

Dependability

I am cognizant of the fact that as I gathered information from my data sources, changes had to be made in my design (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). For instance, information gathered through interviews was more salient and relevant to my study. In this case, I was responsible for making the necessary changes in my data collection strategies to include more interviews. Another example, I originally purposed to conduct student focus groups to aid in the triangulation of my findings. However, I found that adding student input to the finding would broaden the study a great deal and not allow me to focus solely on the collaboration between academic affairs and student affairs.

Confirmability

I kept an audit trail of my field notes should an external auditor happen to desire to determine if my analysis was correct using the information I collected. In

addition, an audit trail helped me determine when a change in data collection is necessary (Marshall & Rossman, 1995).

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The respondents all were faculty and student affairs staff instrumental in beginning or continuing the Art and Design Learning Community in a college that has an emphasis in art and design at Midwestern University. This chapter will first, outline a profile of the respondents. Second, discuss the six major themes that emerged from the collaboration between faculty and student affairs: 1) views on the role of faculty and student affairs specialists, 2) views of the purpose of the learning community, 3) views of their role and the contributions of others to the learning community, 4) challenges of the merger between student and academic affairs, and 5) learning communities as a form of faculty development. Finally, this chapter will discuss the respondents' advice to other student affairs staff and faculty members who may choose to begin collaboration.

Profile of Respondents

Each of the respondents was asked to describe his or her current job position and professional background in order to gain a contextual understanding about the respondents' personalities, why they made the decision to join the Art and Design Learning Community, their teaching or professional philosophy to provide a framework discover how these factors influenced their collaboration (with faculty members and student affairs specialists) and their interpretation of the experience.

Faculty

David Pierce

Role in the learning community

David Pierce is the founder of the learning community. He was involved in the evolution of the learning community from its inception.

Background

David had a different path to the professoriate. As a child, David's father would go to the store and buy something, hand him the directions and say, "go figure it out". Once young David would "figure it out", his father would ask him to explain *how* he did it. This proved to instill a love of "putting things together" and a love of teaching. This was almost preparatory for his career in landscape architecture and the professoriate. Much of what David learned about the professorate came from the examples he had as an undergraduate. His examples were extreme; one professor was an alcoholic, and another, a drug addict. He also had a wonderful experience with a professor who engaged the students in the learning process. On the opposite extreme, he took a class with a professor that was an excellent practitioner in the field but did not communicate well with the students.

> I had these kinds of varieties of experiences and I guess I've always enjoyed the chance to figure something out and be able to explain it to somebody else and I guess maybe it started back as a kid.

David had never considered an academic career as a viable option until a professor suggested it to him during his junior year in college. Simultaneously, a colleague a year older that graduated the year before wrote to him from graduate

school, urging him to look into the graduate program for himself. So David decided to take a closer look at academia. He eventually applied, was accepted, and began his graduate career.

In graduate school, he had the opportunity to become a teaching assistant. He enjoyed his teaching experience very much. Nonetheless, as he neared graduation, he chose to first work in the private sector. That year was 1981, the year the country went into recession and there were no jobs in his field. Even seasoned practitioners were being laid off. So, David applied to some universities to begin his career in academia.

> So I came into this one-year temporary position and they put together the tenure track package. I reapplied to that and ended up getting the tenure track position. Two courses that I taught every year that I was on faculty were the introductory courses in landscape architecture one which was a studio course, the other a lecture course. The combination of those experiences gave me a real sensitivity to some of the issues that new students face as well as I thoroughly enjoyed working with new students.

At the time of the interview, David had been a faculty member for nearly twenty years. About eleven years into his career in academia, David applied for and began an administrative position in the college.

Teaching philosophy

> Every person on the face of the planet is inherently creative because they're created in the image of a creative God. I also strongly believe that every person on the face of the planet has value period...Another piece of that is I

> also believe that every person that steps into a learning environment has something to contribute to that learning environment because they don't come as the kind of the proverbial blank slate. They come with life experiences, with background with values, with perceptions about the world. Maybe the experiences have largely been about acquisition of knowledge but not about application and integration and synthesis of that knowledge. In the Design studio, that's what its all about, its about application, integration and synthesis...I don't look at myself as the 'expert' teacher, but as a facilitator of learning environments. I do believe that I have something to contribute just because of experience in structuring those learning environments. Its not a 'me' giving to 'them', they have to be active partners in this learning or it doesn't make any sense for them.

Susan D'Arby

Role in the learning community

During part of the time of the interviews, Susan D'Arby was a faculty member in the learning community. Her major roles were to serve as facilitator of one of the two sections of the course for the learning community and to be a faculty resource for the students. Susan is a veteran professor of 19 years.

Background

Susan's early educational experiences were in a small, rural, nurturing school in which she was one of five people in her class. She had a variety of interesting experiences while attending public junior high school in Montgomery, Alabama during desegregation. High school for Susan was different in that she felt that it was

not challenging enough and instead she chose to supplement her education by teaching herself. Although she began college with a major in biology, she chose to pursue a long-time interest in Architecture as a career. During her graduate career in Architecture she enjoyed a small graduate program at a big university. For the last 19 years, she has served as a faculty member at Midwestern University. During part of the time of her interviews, she was serving her first and only year as the faculty member in the learning community.

Teaching philosophy

> I think of myself as more of a coach than an authority. I can do that because of what I teach. I teach Design and so Design is not about a certain body of information that's fixed.

One consistency to note is the fact that both faculty members felt that their place was to facilitate learning, and not pour knowledge into the students' brains. This humility and respect for the process of learning and their role in it was also a factor of the success with their student affairs colleagues.

Student Affairs

Scott Dempsy

Role in the learning community

Scott Dempsy works in the Academic Services Unit in the Department of Residence. Within his role, his duty is to work with residential learning communities to establish academically supportive programs. Scott began working with the Art and Design Learning Community in 1997 to work with the Peer Mentors, coordinate

the studio space, the computer lab space, the training of staff members and to work closely with David, the coordinator of the Learning Community.

Background

Scott began his career as an eleventh grade English teacher and speech and debate coach. During this time, Scott was exposed to two somewhat different roles. Teaching English was very traditional with classrooms, desks, roles and assignments. However, as a debate coach, Scott was able to help students apply their learning in a very real way outside of the school setting. This introduction into the co-curricular enhancement of the curricular was of particular interest to Scott.

> In my case, that was it, English was the clinical, there was a clinical operation but then there was the actual application of this knowledge that we say is so important and I got to see that in the natural so that was pre-Midwest U. So that's always been an interest of mine, the education and the extra-curricular. So that took me to the path of Student Affairs Administration.

Professional philosophy

> I guess I'm more like Dewey in that for learning to be meaningful, students have to see that its applicable to their interests, their long-term or short-term goals, and though that's not always possible in every case, the more of it that you can do, the more powerful and meaningful the experience for the student and for the instructor, the more powerful the educational experience.

Brian Caldwell

Role in the learning community

Brian Caldwell is a Student Service Specialist in the College. He has served as a facilitator of one of the two sections of the course that accompanies the Art and Design Learning Community for four years.

Background

Brian's professional track to student affairs was very traditional in the sense that he did not originally begin his career as a student affairs specialist. Brian received his B.A. in Hotel, Restaurant Management at Midwestern University in 1993 and began working as a manager for Pizza Hut. Soon, an opportunity opened to return to Midwestern University to work in Food Service. While there, he spent more and more time with the students he served. These students opened to him and began sharing their concerns about their academic, financial and personal lives. As a former student, Brian began to encourage students and if need be, send them to specific people in specific offices because he had received similar help as a student. Brian soon realized that the encounters with students were the most rewarding parts of his day. One day, Brian's supervisor sent him to the Minority Student Affairs office to pick up flyers for the Martin Luther King holiday. When Brian met with the Director of Minority Affairs to ask for the flyers, he remarked that there were no flyers because there was no one to plan any events. As Brian prepared to leave, the Director said that he had heard of him before and thanked him for sending so many students to him for help. He then offered him a position in the office that had been difficult to fill. Brian accepted the job that day and put in two weeks notice at Food

Service. He worked in the Minority Student Affairs office for two years and through his dealings, he met David. They learned that they had a very good working relationship and when a position opened in the College, Brian applied. When asked about his professional philosophy, Brian began by reciting a quote from an unknown author, "Anything I do must be worthwhile because I'm paying a day of my life for it. What I accomplish must be worthwhile because the price is high".

Professional philosophy

> I'm concerned about the whole student, about how they interact with each other, what they take from their learning environment, what they add to their learning environment, and I'm very concerned about developing competent contributors to their academic and social circles.

The teaching or working philosophy of the respondents is very revealing. Both faculty respondents felt that they were facilitators of learning rather than dictators. This attitude towards teaching and learning is an indication of why they may have chosen to teach in a non-traditional environment like learning communities where students are active participants in the learning process (Tinto, 1996, 1997, 1999). Both student affairs specialist respondents' philosophy reflects a respect and complimentary attitude toward teaching and what their expertise could offer to it.

The Conception of the Learning Community

In order to better understand the collaboration between student affairs and faculty members in this learning community, it was important to discover how the learning community first began. This section outlines 1) beginning the learning community, and 2) rationale for a lack of linked courses.

Beginning the Learning Community

David Pierce had just begun his job as the Associate Dean for the College. He was alarmed at the low retention rates from the first to second year for College first-year students. David as the Associate Dean and professor of a Design Introductory Course wanted to understand why the 1st year students were not moving on to the 2nd year. This low retention rate was not only a concern for students, but also he also recognized that increasing student retention could greatly benefit the students, the College and even the University. As an administrator, he was able to see students from a broader perspective. This broader perspective began to include the success of students and that academic success also entailed success from a developmental standpoint. He had an opportunity to attend an in-house conference on the future of student affairs that would prove to be instrumental in finding a solution.

> I attended that and started to get interested and saw the connection between what they were concerned about in terms of student development. And thinking about the student and my role and kind of shepherding the academic side of this college and we started talking with folks in the Department of Residence and it became clear that there was a strong contribution being made from both sides and when you have a residential program, you are at the nexus of Student Affairs and Academic Affairs and you start bringing a course like we taught into the residence halls, you're blurring the boundaries between these things so I guess that I've always felt that there is a strong contribution from both sides that we have a lot to learn from each other.

He recognized that the reasons for the low retention rate could be due to adjustment difficulties, uncertain student goals, incongruence with the university and even a sense of isolation to name a few. He also learned more about student affairs through that conference and became aware that he and student affairs professionals shared some of the same goals. Simultaneously, Jeff Jacobsen, Academic Service Coordinator in the Department of Residence (DOR) was exploring ways that the academic mission of the University could be supported by the DOR. He scheduled a meeting with all the Associate Deans to discuss possibilities. Because David had been teaching introductory courses, he tossed around the idea with his students concerning what would improve the first year experience and whether a residential floor could be a part of that.

> So we started thinking of having Design students live together. I remember one of the students saying, "right now if you come on campus as a Design student, you most likely live on a floor of Aggies or Engineers who don't have an appreciation of many of the assignments that we have to do as Design students". The subtext of that is that not only do we feel insecure about being a first-year student, if there's not someone among our peers to value the work we're doing, it compounds that insecurity.

Students responded favorably and suggested that it not be mandatory so that students still have course options.

Rationale for a Lack of Linked Courses

Not the average Learning Community, the Art and Design Learning Community does not have linked courses. Linked courses are reported by many to

be the core of the definition of learning communities (Gabelnick, et al., 1990; Levine, Smith, Tinto & Gardner, 1999; Shapiro & Levine, 1999). The Art and Design Learning Community, while considered to be a learning community, it does not fit this definition. Although the Art and Design Learning Community does not have linked courses, there were some very solid reasons why that was not the best option for this particular group. In Design pedagogy, students are grouped in very small classes in which they have direct contact with professors and peers. Design professional programs are very prescribed without much room to take additional courses and therefore it was not reasonable to add on yet another course to students' schedules. David reasoned,

> The first year and the last year are generally when there's the most flexibility to take elective courses outside of the college. If we had created a linked series of courses in that first year, it would have further restricted an already very tight curricular structures for these students and we felt that they needed to have the freedom to take the courses that they wanted to take plus the courses that they needed to take as prerequisites to entering their prospective professional programs and those varied quite a but across the college.

Even if students did not want to add an additional required course, they enjoyed the idea of living in a residential community with other Design students.

View on the Purpose of the Learning Community

I asked each of the respondents to tell me what they felt the purpose of the learning community should be. Specifically, I wanted to determine if all would state a similar or shared vision or goal for the program. This information would be

evidence for the basic tenets of collaboration. The very definition of collaboration includes shared commitment to reaching a goal (Hartup & Rubin, 1986) and that goal in the case of learning communities in general, should be toward enhancing student learning and development (Kuh, 1996; Schroeder, 1999b). I found that the respondents held very similar views on the purpose of the learning community and their own hope for it. There were two slight differences that emerged as sub-themes: 1) Providing a sense of community for students 2) The Learning Community as a Support to the Academic Mission.

Providing a Sense of Community for Students

When David first began conceptualizing the idea of creating a learning community, he talked with students in his introductory course. He learned that students often felt isolated in their residence halls. Many times, students from other disciplines could not understand some of the assignments that Design students were given. Their assignments were not the traditional essay, etc. They felt it would be helpful to live with students that were going through similar experiences.

> For me, the whole motivation for having the learning community was providing an environment where everybody can achieve to their highest level and try to encourage them to do that.

Susan and Scott both emphasized the importance of the environment and community for the students' success. Susan noted that students in a large university need more personal contact with faculty and student affairs:

> In my opinion what it should be about, which, is providing a supportive environment for students during their freshman year at a big large

overpowering institution. It's to make it seem smaller and have more personal contact. Build a sense of community

Scott felt that the Art and Design Learning Community is a collaboration of expertise to produce positive results for students.

The Art and Design Learning Community is an effort to create a learning environment that is seamless with the hope and the expectation that the creation of that environment will enhance students learning and their success.

The Learning Community as a Support to the Academic Mission

Brian felt that the purpose of the learning community is to give students the tools necessary to be successful in their disciplines. Those tools include using his expertise to help students to begin to apply what they learn. He said that the purpose of the Art and Design Learning Community is to:

[Teach] young people how to create for themselves a plan of action to be able to approach their majors and draw from whatever creative forces they need to use to be successful and grow into their discipline.

The Evolution of the Learning Community

The Art and Design Learning Community has gone through major evolutionary changes since it's inception. Among some of those changes is the growth of the community, although during its first year in Fall 1997 it began with spaces for 50 students, 25 men and 25 women, it has grown to have enough space for 125 students in Fall 2001. During this time there were both staff and structural changes. Some major changes to the program took place during the first and second years of the program and will be outlined below.

The First Year

A two-semester seminar was set-up with goals to:

--Introduce students to the college
--Help solidify their decision about a major
--Bring in faculty and upper-level students in to talk about their various programs.
--Introduce them to options for the future such as study abroad, internships careers after college, etc.

The seminar had two sections. Two student services specialists were assigned to teach each section--Brian Caldwell and Mattie Fordham. Brian and Mattie worked on developing a syllabus. Although they developed the syllabus, taught the class, and brought in faculty for special discussions, it was hard for them to relate to the students on an academic level because they had no background in studio pedagogy. David noted,

> What was lacking from that was it was just student service people and there was no strong Design component in it. By bringing in a Design faculty member and myself, we were able to say, "Ok, there was this part that was valuable but there's also a distinctively Design spin on this material that we need to put in place to ground and support the skills or attributes or knowledge in the Design setting" so that seemed to be a seed change for the group and they started clicking and started getting on board with the whole thing. And this first semester we abandoned the book altogether.

Student affairs in an academic setting is not enough

This is an interesting change in the semester. Most of the literature on collaboration between student and academic affairs suggests that if they simply

begin to work together on the same project, somehow everything will automatically work out. That was not the case in this learning community. David and Brian discovered that they needed to think through how to *actively* utilize Brian's student affairs expertise to support the academic mission. It was not enough that Brian as a student affairs specialist taught a group of Design students how to be better students and taught skills such as how to study, etc. Students were not responding well to the course as it was. The academic component had to be the most dominant within the learning community and everything needed to reflect that. So David and Brian needed to discover how to achieve that balance while allowing students to benefit fully from Brian's expertise. Even so, Brian did not have the Design expertise to communicate to students.

A very real solution was yet at their fingertips. The Peer Mentors that they hired were upper class Design students. They had successfully navigated through their first year and through the culture of the College. Brian began to rely more on them to convey the Design component within the course. They added a new dimension to the program and were an asset that became very much utilized in the classroom as well as the residence hall. Brian would share from his expertise and the Peer Mentors would share from a Design perspective and their experiences. From my observations, it seemed to be an effective partnership because what expertise one lacked, the other could provide. The group saw that each of the members of the staff had great value. Brian then used his knowledge of student affairs pedagogy to supplement the academic mission. The peer mentors acted as

'middle management' and have the closest relationship with the students and relate much of what they experience to the Learning Community Coordinators.

Mattie Fordham discontinued her stay in the college that semester for medical reasons and David Pierce took over the course. When David took over, he and Brian worked closely on refining the goals of the program. A good deal of collaboration took place and the second version of the syllabus emerged.

The Second Year

David's long-term goal for the Art and Design Learning Community is that it would become self-sustaining. He also wanted to have new faculty members involved to offer fresh perspectives. The summer before the second year began, Brian, David and Scott and even I attended the Conference on Learning Communities at Midwestern University. During the Conference, they discussed the successes and mistakes of the previous year and made plans for the following year. I was pleased to be invited to sit in on some of those discussions. During the second year of the learning community, he hired Susan D'Arby as the faculty member. She was not able to attend the conference because she had been teaching in a private boarding school for gifted and talented Native American students in New Mexico. To include Susan in the discussion and plans for the program for that year, David and Brian sat down to talk. David said,

> When she came back, we spent the better part of a day together talking through Learning Communities, the rationale for them, what we'd done in the past, what we might do in the future and then Brian and Susan went off and pretty much stewed up the course. They had the syllabi from the previous

year and there are some elements that got repeated and some elements that got deleted and certainly all of them got refined and tweaked somewhat. I really didn't have anything to do with the creation of the syllabi this year.

David was still involved in the learning community in an administrative role, however, he no longer taught the course. He did not have to attend every meeting because he gave much of the responsibility to Brian, Susan and the Peer Mentors. Brian seemed to lead the meetings most of the time. He created the agenda and facilitated the meeting. Susan did not facilitate the meetings simply because she was a faculty member. Brian facilitated the meetings because he was felt to be capable of doing so. The traditional sense of hierarchy between academic and student affairs was not evident in this respect. Although David did not teach that year, his presence was very much felt by Susan.

I think that even though David Pierce was not really present in any way on a day- to-day basis, I felt his presence in the spirit of the thing because I'd just come into the thing. So I was very conscious of when I would think about doing something I would think, "Would David want this or would he not want it?"

Personal Views on the Role of Faculty and Student Affairs

Central to the success of collaboration between student and academic affairs is a respect for the expertise of the other. Even further, one must recognize that their backgrounds, while different, complement one another well (Arnold & Kuh, 1999). To believe that each has significant and relevant information is the beginning of that respect. To this end, I asked each of the respondents what they felt the role

of faculty and student affairs professionals in academia were in general. In addition, I wanted to discover what they felt they individually contributed to the learning community specifically and most importantly, what they felt their colleagues contributed. Blake (1996) suggested that student affairs professionals might not be familiar with or be able to fully conceptualize what faculty members do. I found that although both the student affairs *and* faculty respondents had some idea of the importance of the other within academia, neither group, however, concisely articulated the role of other. This seemed to be a reflection of what Blake (1996) described as the student affairs and faculty "mystery" of the other, as the following sections illustrate.

Role of Faculty in Academia

As faculty members, Susan and David held a similar view of the role of faculty. For both Susan and David there is definitely a need and place for faculty to conduct research. However, both also tended to take a more holistic view of the role of faculty in that it included not only research but also a strong component of teaching and within that, facilitating learning.

Faculty as more than researchers

David interpreted the highly regarded role of research in faculty life in broader terms for his own practice. He also highlighted the myriad roles and responsibilities for the faculty member within academia.

> I think in many respects the triad of teaching, scholarship and service is a pretty viable model...The work of Ernest Boyer and Scholarship Reconsidered resonates with me in that scholarship can manifest itself in

many ways not just about the scholarship of discovery. There are people who are scholars in their area through the literature; there are artists, musicians, performers, people whose scholarship or area of expertise isn't in structured learning environments. For me personally, facilitating learning is at the core. I know that there are faculty members who have 100% research appointments and that is what makes their heart beat. That is not what makes my heart beat (laughter). Learning is still at the center of this. For me personally, research has always been at the perimeter, not at the center. Although I think academia in general as a rule in this society has to educate people who are going to move into positions of responsibility and leadership in a wide array of professions. The universities also have a responsibility to contribute new knowledge. And in turn provide service internal to the institution. There is a governance, a system of continual improvement that has to go on but there is also service to society involved and faculty members engaging in both the places they live as well as professional communities.

Some literature suggests that there is a mismatch between what experiences students have in higher education and what they actually need (American College Personnel Association, 1994; Hutchings, 1996; Wingspread Group on Higher Education, 1993). For faculty members to begin to enrich students' experiences, Hutchings (1996) suggested that a paradigm shift is needed in the way faculty members approach their profession and engage students. She said that there should be a culture of teaching in universities that facilitates an ongoing and in-depth

conversation of teaching and learning. David's view of the role of teaching is an example of the paradigm shift that has learning at the center.

Non-traditional role for faculty

Susan's ideas suggest that she believes that there are specific roles for faculty members, one that includes faculty members as researchers. In addition there is a role for faculty to reach out to students to help them apply what they learn.

> I think there is a role for people doing research. At the other end of the spectrum, I think there are people that need to reach out to students in that extra-curricular way. And make students know that education is not, "well now I'm in class and now I go home and turn my brain off". It permeates every day of your life. I think at that extreme you need people who are kind of willing to see the classroom as not the only boundary of what to do. Some people are good at that and some people are not.

Both faculty respondents' non-traditional attitudes toward the role of faculty and teaching give light to the reasons why they may have chosen to participate in a program like learning communities. Learning communities are programs that are a manifestation of the new paradigm shift in teaching and have enriching students' learning and the student experience at the center (Hutchings, 1996).

The "how to" of faculty

Blake expressed that student affairs regard faculty from a "how to" standpoint rather than from a "what" (1996). This suggests that student affairs professionals recognize what teachers do ("how to"), but they may not be familiar with the specific detail of the discipline of faculty members ("what"). When asked about the role

faculty and student affairs, both Brian and Scott mentioned the *similarities* between faculty and student affairs rather than the differences. Even more than the specific role of faculty, both agreed that the role of faculty was to be an expert in their field. For example, Brian expressed it this way,

> A teacher recognizes that they have a handful of information that's a part of a larger hole as big as the universe. They'll never ever have all of it. They'll never have most of it. They'll always have a piece of it. New information is being generated daily. If we first teach young people how to inquire. Just solely for the sake of their own personal benefit and not because its' coming on an exam and teach them the merits of wrestling with information.

The importance of faculty was clear to each respective group. For the student affairs respondents' however, the role of faculty was expressed in *how* they teach instead of the specific details of their position. In this study, faculty respondents were also not as clear as to what student affairs professionals actually did. Instead, they each had a general definition of it and the belief that their expertise is complimentary.

Role of Student Affairs in Academia

All respondents agreed that Student Affairs is a valuable asset to the student experience. Brian and Scott in particular expressed the very strong and clear belief that the mission of student affairs is complementary to academic affairs.

Student affairs as goal oriented

Brian believes that all of Student Affairs activities should be goal oriented and focused on enhancing the whole student as well as the academic agenda.

> I believe that student affairs and student services play a complimentary role and I think that at every opportunity we should refer back to what's going on in the classroom or studio and how can these skills be turned into tools which you can put into a pretty formidable tool belt already. And continue to build on your educational experience.

This suggests that Brian believes that student affairs as a profession should not focus on creating programs and experiences for students with no academic goal in mind. Rather, he believes that student affairs programs should have as its goal to reflect and be an extension of the academic mission.

Student affairs as addressing the whole student

Scott, on the other hand, expressed his idea of the role of student affairs by addressing the historical divide between student and academic affairs and the importance of the role of student affairs in student development and also application of knowledge acquired.

> The role of student affairs is to ensure or promote the development of the whole student that even though the academics is the primary reason that people are here we know from developmental theory and adjustment theory that there are some other variable that can contribute to that academic success. So its that idea of that potentially stagnant clinical environment that a classroom should not be but sometimes is where this is the test, this is the assignment, this is what you do, this is how you get your grade. With the other variables that impact that, do I feel adjusted, do I feel socialized how do I explore other opportunities beyond this? How do I incorporate peers and

mentors into my experience? How do I grow while I'm here? How do I develop other leadership skills? How do all those things contribute to my well-being and my success? I feel like student affairs administrators inform the academic side of the house and re-emphasize the importance of some of those variables that may seem peripheral but really are central to students' university experience. And I think can be central to their success or lack of success. It's hard to separate the two. I don't know if the model, the Higher Education model purposely distances themselves. At the one point that student affairs and academic affairs...at one point they were one and the same and it was a conscious effort to separate the two. I think there's also a longing to reunite, at least on the student affairs side and I think with initiatives like the learning communities initiative that suggests that there's also a longing on the academic side to return to that cohesive, unified, philosophy of educating the whole student.

Both Susan and David recognized the importance of student affairs, but student affairs specific role was not clearly stated. Susan expressed it in this way:

At Midwestern University, you have a more pressing need to have people devoted to and are specifically hired to do that kind of stuff than at a small school where the professor also serves as the academic advisor and they have dinner at their house like I did when I was in undergrad. But at a place that's got heavy institutional artillery, like this place does, you have to have heavy institutionalized ways of dealing with students' issues that fall outside of the classroom jurisdiction. That's the way I see Student Affairs at MU. And

people like Brian who are kind of like border crossers. And I think Brian really understands that...his role. He's good at what he does, I respect him.

David's view was sympathetic to some of the difficulties student affairs specialists may face when trying to earn respect and define their role in an academic setting. He expressed that he understood the historical significance of the tensions between student and academic affairs.

I think there is a point in time where the distinction between academic affairs and student affairs didn't exist. The personal and academic development of a student was all under the...faculty member. I still buy into that. But I also recognize that at an institution particularly like the one we have that has such a strong research component to it, the demands on the faculty are such that there is not the kind of margins for the personal development that students need. As such, student affairs are a very critical part of the university, both in the living environments of the university, but also in developing support systems as well as creating the capacity for leadership and responsibility. For me probably the weakest point of the university or most universities today I think is that academic affairs and student affairs are somewhat divorced from one another and that for some faculty their perception of their role with students is simply to give them goods. Their personal life is their personal life and that's it, you just separate those two out. I think it also comes to mind the fact that faculty members today often work with much larger numbers of students than were typical before the Civil War and that we by necessity have to have a different relationship with students than in the past. Student affairs

> has also got some very significant challenges in the sense that there is not a kind of a normative value system to draw from. A lot of personal development stems from a past sense of transcendent truth and some kind of sense of what stability meant and it seems that those notions are not commonly shared at least to the extent that they were in the past. And it also becomes a great challenge in terms of how do you encourage maturity for the students. What that looks like is so varied. So while I strongly think that student affairs is a critical component, I think it's also a very difficult one. It has a very difficult mission to address. The academic side to some extent is almost a lot easier you can kind of compartmentalize this knowledge and say, here it is and you decide what you're going to do with it.

David very clearly recognized that faculty members only see a portion of the student's world, all of which affects the student's academic performance. He noted that the student affairs profession is a critical link in universities to fill the gap and meet more of students' holistic needs. He also reflected on the complexity of the historical and current role of student affairs within higher education. Both David and Susan felt that there was a need for someone to guide the personal development of students aside from in-class opportunities. Both respondents cited student affairs as a way to meet that need.

Contribution of Each Member

Another dynamic that I wanted to discover in this study is what role each respondent felt that they played in the learning community and also what role that they felt their colleagues played. I asked each of the respondents a three-part

question. If they thought of the Art and Design Learning Community as a play, a) who would they describe as the major characters? b) What are their roles c) what does each contribute to the plot and purpose? The responses resulted in four sub themes 1) the staff as equal players 2) faculty and student affairs personnel as the major player 3) students as the major player and 4) instructional leader.

The Staff as Equal Players

Brian felt that the whole staff was on an equal par. This is indicative of the "domino effect" environment of respect that I witnessed. For example, Brian said, "David treats me this way, 'Your opinion is important to me otherwise I wouldn't have hired you. I expect you to do a good job, and I expect you to tell me when I'm not helping you do a good job'". Brian said that he then gives that same respect to the Peer Mentors and the Peer Mentors give the respect to the students in the program. Each person in the group had a distinct role to play and contributed a great deal to its success, the sum of the whole is greater than the individual parts. He recognized the integral part that each member played.

> I can't say that one segment of the cast does more than the other. We give each section of the cast something to do and they're all integral parts. The Peer Mentors help teach.

Brian's view of his own role

> My job is to make sure that the people who know more than I do get a chance to say it. That's my role there. The other part is the papers, the reflection, the wrestling with issues. I still don't know enough to carry on a decent conversation in any discipline. But I do know when someone is on their way

> and I've been blessed to be able to come up with the right questions to continue them in the right direction. So I kind of hide in not knowing [the discipline] but I told the students upfront, "I don't know, a lot of you know more than I do but a lot of you don't know how to apply it". That's where I come in. So I establish my role. So they don't come to me with questions specifically about their discipline, they come to the people I bring in or their peer mentors. They come to me about life things, about making choices, about planning schedules, about making decisions about where they spend their time. That goes into being a successful student in their discipline. So they bring to me the student affairs things but I say that upfront. If I say that I'm someone that is advanced in art and design then they'll come and ask me questions that I don't have the answer to and I'll be exposed and then they won't come and ask me the things that are within my realm. So I only do what I say I can do. It's working.

Brian saw his role as complimentary in that he does not know the discipline and does not make any excuses for it. He feels that his role is to help students apply what they learn.

Faculty and Student Affairs Personnel as the Major Player

Susan held the view that Brian and David are the major players and that she was on the same "level" as the Peer Mentors. This indicates that she did not feel like a major player within the Art and Design Learning Community. This is also indicative of the discomfort that she felt within the program (this will be discussed later in this chapter). Susan felt that although she made some important

contributions, her role simply was not on par with Brian and David. She felt that she did not have as much "professional stake" in the program as did Brian and David. She saw that they were heavily invested in the program both time-wise and professionally. She did not feel that same professional connection to the program.

Susan's view of her own role

Susan's role, she felt, was to be the academic counterpart to the program and that through her expertise, she could advise the students, peer mentors and even Brian as to what students may encounter within their discipline.

> I was a sub major player. I would say my role wasn't dramatically different. It was different in terms of what I had to do, but it wasn't dramatically different in terms of the scale of impact that the peer mentors had. I think maybe I treated my group a little bit differently because of this. I think more often than not, I let the peer mentors take charge of the sessions and do things and more shared the podium...I think my role last year was to counsel Brian about things that I knew about in terms of what I knew about what the students were going to encounter their second year in their various programs. Sort of get them ready for putting together portfolios. I have experience with what it takes to be in programs, and stay in programs and what the discipline involvement is on a nitty gritty daily basis that he doesn't have. So I think I was an advisor in terms of the types of activities we did that would be appropriate for those students. So I think I served a very useful role. Because I think even though David knew that kind of stuff, some of the things that they had done previously weren't specific enough to the degree

programs. They knew that and so last year when we were revising that, I was able to be an advisor.

Scott felt that Brian, David and he were among the major players. But he also believed that they were on an equal par, equally respected, while David was still the undisputed leader. Scott felt that David was the clear leader within the learning community because of his expertise within his discipline and that the academic component of the learning community was most important. The lines between student and academic affairs were very clear and concise in Scott's response.

> Brian is a student affairs administrator, David Pierce is an academician and administrator so he brings a level of expertise about what 's required within the Design curriculum on an experience base that Brian will never be able to provide because his training has been in another way. I think it all meshes perfectly; they both teach, they both instruct, but David's the producer because his expertise and his accreditation provides him with the academic background specific to these disciplines to perform that role.

Scott's view of his own role

Scott does recognize that he provides a critical contribution to the staff. He is the administrative link from the learning community to the residence hall.

> My role is focused toward the out of class experience and bringing to this collaboration an understanding about residential life, residential policies, rules and procedures and how we can use what we know about the out of class experience to enhance students in class learning experience.

Students as the Major Player

David's view is very telling; his view that students are the major players was indicative of his feeling about the reason why he is there. The main motivation for why David has invested himself in the program is students and creating better learning environments and opportunities for those students.

> I think the role of the main actors in the play this year is an egocentric role. It's learning about themselves [students], figuring out who they are, what their interests are, how to start thinking about themselves in a different place and particularly in the first semester it's very largely all about self and there's this kind of insecurity about that at the same time and it isn't until towards the second semester, the last act of this particular play that their view starts to become a little more outward and they start to think not only about how do I survive here, what's my major going to be, what's my future going to be, but they can start to think about a larger community of people, they can start to think about a profession or a discipline that they're going to start engaging in a different kind of way. But I think that that's their role.

David's view of his own role

In his response, Brian, Scott and he are more in the periphery because they are the facilitators of the environment.

> I think that Brian's and my role is to be in the background both as kind of choreographers and at the same time, kind of creating a journey or series of experiences along the way that will help them to independently create their own journey.

Each of the respondents was explicitly clear that the reason and main motivation for the program was to better the student experience, regardless as to how they viewed their own contribution. They feel that a contribution was made and that it directly affected students.

Instructional Leader

As I witnessed within the learning community and learned at the 2001 Conference on Learning Communities, both parties need to meet and meet often to share ideas about the vision and goal in order to make effective progress towards it. Time to establish a relationship is a key element in the success of the shared goal. The Art and Design Learning Community staff quite frequently met for discussions and occasionally fellowship. I witnessed one of these types of gatherings at David's home. This was an attempt to establish relationships and get to know one another on a much more informal basis. The staff's regular planning meetings are once a week to discus the week's activities and prepare for upcoming events and classes. The meetings were often lively with much discussion and full participation from all staff members—including the faculty, student affairs specialists, and peer mentors. All members had an opportunity to participate and take responsibility.

At every meeting that I witnessed, the planning meetings seemed to provide the space to discuss what was going in a positive direction for the students and the learning community as a whole. Through the several generations of syllabi, it was obvious that the semester was carefully planned out. However, there is an open atmosphere at the planning meetings in which any member can and did speak up and let the group know if they thought that there could be some new additions or

changes to the program to better benefit students. I noticed this phenomenon at each meeting that I attended. On one particular occasion, the planning session began with a discussion of the week's activities and what did and did not work well. All of the members related with detail their own opinion. One topic of discussion was a student that was having personal and academic difficulties. All of the members were aware of the issue even though he was a student in only one of the sections because the group kept each other abreast of the all the happenings. Instead of simply stating what should be done about the student, they made proactive decisions on how to deal with the issue.

One by one, faculty, student affairs specialists and peer mentors stated what they would personally do to ensure the success of the student. The atmosphere is not very hierarchical in the sense that only faculty members have the final and only say about the program and other members of the staff are less valued. All members are highly valued, but there is also a clear leader--David. He said,

> There has to be that balance between making sure that all the voices have been heard and that the input is on the table but also a point in time where there's a place where you say this is the direction we're going to take.

It was obvious that each person, were free to offer any advice or opinion. Most importantly, all comments were well received and accepted. Because I attended both the class sessions and meetings, I was even considered at one point as a part of the group rather than merely an observer. I was asked my opinion on more than one occasion on happenings in the classroom. This very open

atmosphere I noted from my personal interactions and the observation from the staff was facilitated in large part by David Pierce.

Scott and Brian in particular mentioned what David's leadership style meant for them. Scott's comments were vividly illustrative of the characteristics I witnessed. Both specialists were even somewhat emotionally moved at times when they talked about David's respect and treatment of them. In one interview, Brian expressed it very simply, "David is the reason why I took this job". Scott expressed it this way,

> He sets an environment where there's...this is not a hierarchical thing, this is an education thing. He creates an environment where everyone's input is valued. That's why he is an effective instructional leader; educational leader and they're rare. They're rare. I haven't explored all the other learning communities, but I would say the Art and Design Learning Community shines on this campus. And one of the reasons it shines is because it has an instructional leader at the helm and he is so impressive. And early on, the hierarchical piece, Angela I had to catch myself, I had to go, wait a minute, this is the Associate Dean of the College that is caring about how I'm doing, what are my interests at this point, how am I feeling today and valuing my input! I had to catch myself! This man is important! This man is a player and he is just as patient and kind and I know he goes from these Design meetings into some high-powered policy, administrative, decision- making meeting. He wears so many hats but you'd never know it. All you know is he's effective. He doesn't pull the rank card. It's really something.

I think something of particular interest here is that Scott said that David does not pull the "rank card". This correlates with literature that suggest that student affairs professionals may feel a lack of respect from their faculty counterparts (Blake, 1996; McAuliffe, Huskey & Buchanan, 1988). It may seem as though it is a continual struggle uphill to gain acceptance and credibility for the profession. Both student affairs specialists seemed nearly relieved to work with such an open-minded faculty member who was not only open-minded, but found success and effectiveness while being open-minded. The loyalty that Scott and Brian expressed toward David, I believe, was very genuine and deeply felt.

Challenges of the Merger of Student Affairs and Academic Affairs

Both Brian and Susan in particular had to do a major acclimation to a new environment when they began to work with the Art and Design Learning Community. Susan felt as if she were "out of her element" and needed to readjust her teaching style and normal way of responding to students to be successful in the learning community environment. They both felt as if they needed to find their niche within the learning community. Brian felt he needed to gain the trust of the faculty members with whom he worked. Before he could accomplish his goals as a student affairs professional in that academic setting, he knew he needed to work closely with faculty. In order to do that, he felt he needed to "legitimize" what he did, earn their trust and to do that, he needed to "speak" their language. The sections below outline some of the challenges and adjustments that Brian made to be more effective in the College. Following those sections, I will detail what challenges Susan faced as a new faculty member in a learning community.

Brian Caldwell

Relating in a new environment

When Brian first arrived at the College, he learned that it is necessary to learn from others in a strange new environment in order to survive in that environment.

> There is a pedagogy language in our College and if you don't use certain linguistic cues, it's hard to let faculty understand that you know where they're coming from; it's almost a trust thing. It's kind of like going into an urban environment. If you don't have the cadence and speech down, if you're not up to date on the right slang, people cast this cautious eye on you. But if you walk in and you kind of know what's going on, if you're willing to listen and willing to be taught, rather than come in as this know it all then you find acceptance much faster. So I applied these same street survival skills to the college and I know that the people in Student Affairs have something valuable to contribute and I know that my College has something valuable to contribute to Student Affairs.

Getting to know faculty members

Brian made a number of key steps to establish himself within the College. First, he held a reception for himself near his office and invited faculty members. On the wall he posted in large letters what his position and duties were and his strategy for achieving them. He announced his presence in the College so that on some level people could more easily identify him and his services would not go unnoticed because people would now know what he had to offer: "I let it be known

up front that I'm an assistor. Students will not be retained by anything that I do but through a compliment of my efforts and what goes on in the classroom".

Learning the 'language' of faculty members

Second, he had to learn the language. He asked faculty to share with him the books that they were reading. He wanted to put his finger on the pulse of the faculty so he could determine what types of things were important to them. Once he understood those things, he could use that knowledge to communicate with them more effectively. Using that language helped him to build trust. Once that trust was gained, he could then begin a learning exchange process with the faculty.

> I know that faculty are experts in their own discipline so before I could begin to do some work that amounted to anything, I had to first of all learn the culture, I had to learn what did our college care about as a whole, start on a macro level and then go micro. This is our College's philosophy and mission statement, this is where we're going, this is our strategic plan, now what does that mean for you as faculty who teach?

Building relationship with faculty

What Brian tried to do is take the first step in building a relationship with faculty members. In one particular instance, Brian invited twenty-two faculty / staff members to go to an in-house conference on race and ethnicity, although the cost was ten dollars a person. Brian offered to pay for each person individually. Twelve faculty members were able to attend the conference, and Brian planned to meet with each of them in as many groups as it takes to discuss what they learned.

Lessons learned

Steps like these have garnered more faculty interest in the complimentary role he can play in the classroom. It is beginning to change the dynamics in the college.

> Now I don't have to call folks...faculty find me and confide things in me more than when I first got there because they understand that I'm trying to learn...If you ask people for help, more than likely they'll come back and ask you for help. So it's a reciprocal relationship that you're forming. So I asked them to teach me because I wanted to teach. And then I show them how there are connections in student development theory and studio pedagogy, these things overlap. But some faculty are resistant to being taught. That's not a good thing or a bad thing that's just a thing and unfortunately, its part of the culture here.

Collaboration in the classroom

When Brian first was asked to teach a course in the College, he knew he had something to offer, but he did not feel that he was a teacher because he was not teaching a specific discipline.

> I don't consider myself a teacher because I hold teachers in such high regard. But I believe I'm very good at teaching young people how to create for themselves a plan of action to be able to approach their majors and draw from there whatever creative forces they need to use to be successful and grow into their discipline.

It was not until he received student evaluations and saw how beneficial he was to students' learning that he realized that he was in fact a teacher. Brian realized that although his approach was not the exact same as David's or Susan's, who teach within the discipline, his expertise and teaching skills are just as important. He helps to point students in the right direction. Through the help of Susan and David, he realized that he may not teach students their discipline, but he does help them to problem solve along the way. David and Susan respected him for the expertise that he brought to the staff and helped him to see it from a different standpoint. Again, the sense that this atmosphere between academic and student affairs respondents is not hierarchical is evident. In the atmosphere of the learning community, Brian did not have to fight amongst his colleagues to be respected for his expertise. In this light, Brian was able to then grow and evolve and see the value of his contribution not only through the eyes of the students, but also his faculty colleagues.

> For me, I bring more of the total student and of the student as a person. As we're talking about becoming a designer, we're also talking about designers who value other people's opinion as well as being able to give it. I think that's the step beyond Chickering's Independence vector where we get to interdependence. 'I am my own person but I value what you bring to my development'.

Susan D'Arby

Adjusting to a new role

Susan had some challenges in adjusting to her role in the learning community. She originally entered the position as faculty member in the learning community believing that she would be able to teach the way that had been rewarding for her and her students but just in a different setting.

> That's the way I teach Design studio, it's a one on one thing and so it was kind of uncomfortable for me. I really didn't feel like I was in my, I had anything to do, in some ways because I didn't see them often enough to get to know them and so that I could be their coach because that's the way I teach and so it was a little...I didn't feel like I was doing everything I could as part of that community. I don't know. So it was sort of frustrating that way

Adjusting to a new environment

Susan's frustration had a number of sources. First, her motivation to be a part of the learning community was fueled by her desire to work with the individual student. However, she said that the format of the course did not allow for very much time with students.

> I can't deal with the individual very well when I have 50 of them and only meet them for two hours a week. And during that time there are organized activities. So that made me uncomfortable only because I felt like the stuff that I'm best at which is the one-to-one thing, I wasn't able to do. I think that I wasn't necessarily the best person to be doing the Art and Design Learning

> Community. It made me not want to continue to do it simply because that's not... being an orchestrator of large group activities is not what I'm good at.

She definitely felt as if the atmosphere was open to the point where she could offer her own suggestions and ideas. But I got the sense that she felt she was riding along on a big machine that wasn't necessarily going in the same direction, as she originally wanted. The difficulty here is illustrative of the personality differences between student and academic affairs mentioned earlier. While student affairs specialists tend to feel at ease socially and often feel comfortable organizing people into groups, faculty members tend to enjoy more introspective, intellectual activities and may be ill at ease in large groups (Blake, 1996). This is a major point because the learning community itself was created to meet some of students' social needs while acclimating them to the academic. Student affairs specialists and faculty members need to work together to meet those needs. Both Susan and Brian had some challenges when adjusting to that merger that was neither all student affairs nor totally an academic environment.

The second source of frustration for her was that she was not very accustomed to dealing with freshman students. All students have their own developmental issues to deal with, some more than others. First-year students certainly are not exempt.

> The source of my discomfort comes from not being able to deal with crowds and having lost all patience for arrogant boys. My tolerance for intolerance is just gone. You get those kids that are freshmen and they haven't grown up yet, and come from 'Whiteyville, Iowa or Illinois'. And they're just spouting

> unthinking things and I want to slap them! I never do, I'm mild mannered when it comes to it. But there was just a handful of them that occasionally would behave in those sick ways that would make me say that we need to reeducate you but I don't want to have to do it, it would be too much work.

In her work, Susan would normally be in contact with upper-class students. If she did have contact with a freshman, that freshman would be very serious, goal-oriented students who knew exactly what they wanted. Working with freshman put her out of her element and their immaturity annoyed her. Faculty normally do not have to deal with students outside of the classroom. Teaching in this particular learning community required that the faculty members teach in a reserved room in the students' dormitory. Outside of the classroom, students may behave somewhat more relaxed and less reserved.

Finally, she did not feel that working in the learning community was intellectually stimulating. Incorporating a strong Design element in the learning community was a necessary challenge during the beginning of the evolution of the Art and Design Learning Community. The students made it known during the first year that they wanted more of a Design 'spin' in their experiences. Again, this is illustrative of the challenges of the merger of student and academic affairs. David once indirectly referred to student and academic affairs as a marriage that faced divorce and is now joining together again. All respondents felt that student and academic affairs should contribute equally but that academic affairs was to definitely be the lead contributor. Finding ways to achieve that have been the challenge. It was a challenge for both Brian and Susan to find it. Susan did not feel as though

she was an equal contributor and therefore did not feel like she was a very strong part of the learning community or even that her skills were fully utilized. Her feelings were not due solely to the fact that it was a challenge to find that academic and student affairs balance, but also because she was the new person within the group. Brian and David had been working together for some time and had established the program.

> In some ways I was not a major player (in the learning community). Not that I felt unimportant, but I was not a major player because I volunteered to do it simply because I think it's a good thing. But I'm not interested in doing research about it or making it part of my professional career agenda. I just think it's a good thing. I enjoy doing things that are good things. So I think, I at times offered things when Brian and I set up the syllabus. I offered ideas and certainly was not a passive participant by any means but I frequently deferred to him in a lot of things because he'd done it before.

From that perspective, student and academic affairs needed to be an extension of each other to run smoothly. The challenge was in finding ways to run smoothly and to be balanced in their representation so that all can benefit. This probably was not as much of a challenge for David as the first faculty member because he had been working closely with first-year students for some time and knew their needs and understood their behavior and maturity level. He enjoyed working with them. So he may not have placed as much significance on discipline information and content.

Learning Communities as a Form of Faculty Development

David feels as though rotating faculty members within the Art and Design Learning Community not only helps the faculty develop professionally, but also keeps the Learning Community alive and fresh with new ideas. In David's opinion, the experience gives faculty a view from a different perspective, hopefully helping faculty to realize the needs of first- year students and how they can work with Student Affairs personnel to enhance student learning:

> One of the things that we are trying to strategically do in the coming years is to make sure there are different faculty members involved in the Art and Design Learning Community on an ongoing basis. So that it's not Susan until she burns out on it. It's a fairly intense way of interacting with the students on an different kind of venue...So we'll have a rotation both so faculty understand what this is and one of the points that was made at the Conference on Learning Communities is that learning communities can be a form of faculty development. It gives faculty an idea of how they can interact with other students in other classes as well and ways that they might approach students in their other classes.

However, there are difficulties in recruiting faculty members. As a faculty member at a Research I type institution, there are many demands on faculty members' time. Not only did I get this sense from David and Susan, but also through talking and listening to faculty members' concerns at the 2001 Conference on Learning Communities. Many tenure-track faculty members are very concerned about earning tenure and in doing so, are very concerned about how their time is

spent and making sure that those activities are centered around things that would help them gain tenure. Teaching in a learning community may be a worthy cause but it is difficult to juggle with an already full teaching and research schedule. Susan suggested that the learning community be counted as more than just one credit because of the extra time that it requires.

> It's not really an overload it's kind of half-in between. You get one course off a year but you teach it two semesters. So because its just a one-credit seminar they can't justify giving you that as a full course so they kind of split the difference by giving you one course off one semester and you have to teach the next semester with that on top of it. I don't think that's going to attract faculty to do it. Because there's a lot more to it than that one credit. There are a lot of meetings with the staff, things to organize and stuff like that. I had an idea of going out to lunch with everybody but that ended up being a smaller group maybe once a semester but I did that. But when you've got 50 of them and you go out to lunch...so lots of things add up to being worth a full credit course so I think structurally that's a problem.

Teaching in a learning community requires a great investment of time for the faculty member. Not only is it required to teach and participate in the development of programs for students, but for many learning communities, including the Art and Design Learning Community, there is an expectation that faculty members spend much more small group and one on one time with students than in a normal classroom setting.

David found that many of the newer faculty members were interested in the Art and Design Learning Community and what it has to offer faculty members and students alike. However, it is difficult for these faculty members to participate fully because of the demands on their time. Also, there is a conflict of interest for some of the potential faculty members of the learning community.

> They are also people who will be evaluating these students in ways that will affect their admission to professional programs. So they have that working on one side where they are being the Coach and on the other side being the evaluator it isn't clear-cut. It's a tough thing to do. So there's a group of people that I would love to pull from but for a number of reasons it just doesn't make sense and in some cases those people can be folks that are also sitting on the panel to examine their portfolios. I am also on the panel for Landscape Architecture so in some cases I might be conflicted in this whole thing. So unfortunately, some of the best people who are equipped to not only understanding freshman issues, have the flexibility it takes to deal with students in that stage of development (are not able to accept the position).

Balancing the intrinsic and extrinsic rewards for faculty

For the faculty member, the rewards for participation in a learning community to date are mostly intrinsic. Some faculty members want very much to balance the extrinsic reward with the intrinsic. Susan said,

> And there's no way I could [participate in more activities in the learning community] because I was teaching other classes. I think really, and I told David this; if you want somebody to do it right, you have to have it be a

regular teaching assignment. But because of the credit load, there's only one, I can't afford to do that. I think the groups need to be smaller.

The university reward system (aside from the new and interesting ways that faculty are now using to make their own experience both extrinsically and intrinsically rewarding) does not necessarily weigh heavily participation of a faculty member in a learning community. As it stands, learning community involvement demands a great deal of time even as it holds a great deal of intrinsic value. To balance the intrinsic and extrinsic value of the learning community experience, many faculty members conduct research on the work they are doing with students, publish it and present the information at conferences or find ways to share what they're doing with their colleagues.

Advice to Other Faculty and Student Affairs Professionals

Getting a sense of what advice each of the respondents would give to other colleagues beginning collaboration similar to the Art and Design Learning Community would shed light on some of the things that they themselves learned along their journey. Each respondent was asked to give one piece of advice and their responses resulted in four sub-themes: 1) Set clear and firm goals 2) Include students in the discussion 3) Make an informed commitment to the program and 4) Get to know colleagues on a relational level.

Set Clear and Firm Goals

David said that to begin any program, clear boundaries must be set about what the program is and is not.

> I guess the things that would be important are to be very clear about what you are trying to accomplish with students. Once you are clear about that, to make sure that you bring into the conversation people who have experience and knowledge and make sure everybody's voice gets listened to. At the same time there's also winnowing process where you say, 'this is what we're going to do, this is not what we're going to do'.

Include Students in the Discussion

Scott mentioned that once the decision has been made to create or be a part of a collaborative program, to take time to discover what the targeted audience, or students would like to see in the program. This is a strategy often done in business but Scott felt that it should also be done within academia.

> That allows you to suspend judgment to release some of the preconceived notions about what it means to be an effective educator for a period so that you can receive information from students about what THEY think makes for an effective educational environment and once you suspend what it is that you've known so you can hear what it is that might be new or foreign to your previous position, you may get some competing information.

Make an Informed Commitment to the Program

Susan implied that it was important for faculty members to know exactly what the program entailed, not only the curriculum and format, but also what implications that has on their time and credit-load. She spoke about her experience with this program specifically,

I don't think people should do it unless they are interested in doing something that is more like advising and less like teaching. Because that's what I think it is. And there are people that appreciate that kind of stuff and I think it takes the right person, not just anybody should do it.

Get to Know Colleagues on a Relational Level

Brian suggested that if student and academic affairs want to start a new initiative to aid students, to plan it but not begin it for at least two years. That time should be spent organizing the program but also getting to know one another as colleagues. Again, this is reflective of the conversations that I witnessed at the 2001 Conference on Learning Communities that in order to have a good working relationship, colleagues, but especially academic and student affairs personnel, must spend time getting to know one another.

First of all, I think you have to learn about each other, I think you need to approach it as any type of relationship, "let's get to know one another, let's get to know the epistemologies that we're dealing with that drive us, the pedagogies and the theories". You need to get to know each other; you need to know where we're coming from. In order to do that, you need to read each other's literature, we also need to read each other's papers, get into each other's heads, see how each other thinks, how we approach certain things.

Assessment of the Benefits of the Art and Design Learning Community for Students

Assessment is a big key within the Art and Design Learning Community. Even before the Learning Community began or before any students were invited to

be a part of the program, a plan was in place to assess whether or not their efforts produced positive results.

Of those students that enroll in four-year institutions, 57% leave before the beginning of their second year (Tinto, 1996). As stated earlier, programs like learning communities can help reduce the percentage of students that leave the institution. The first year of the program, 14.3% of the students that participated in the learning community left the university before the beginning of the second year, 10.2% of a control group left the university. During the second and third years of the program, more Design students were retained at the university than their Design counterparts. This could also be due to changes within the program.

During the second year of the program, only 7.9% of Design students left the university and of their cohort, 14.6% left. During the third year, only 8.9% percent of the Art and Design Learning Community students left the university and 21.5% of their cohort that did not participate in the program left the university (A. Gansmer-Topf, unpublished raw data).

Art and Design Learning Community students over the years since its inception have consistently gotten higher grades than their Design counterparts and continue to do so throughout their academic career. The Art and Design Learning Community consistently has a higher percentage of students still at Midwestern University than those control Design students that did not participate in the learning community. The Art and Design Learning Community students also seem to leave the program with a better understanding of what career they want to pursue. Design students that did not participate in the program change majors more often or even

leave the college. This of course could be due to the fact that those students that signed up for the learning community were more highly motivated and prepared for college. However, the program was offered to all entering Design freshmen on a first come, first served basis. David said,

> Even after the first year we saw that this was an idea that has some potential and certainly after the second year we started seeing the differences in academic performance and persistence and probably even more important than those things are the kinds of responses that came from students through course evaluations and focus groups where they expressed the value of this program to them really convinced us that this was worth pursuing.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to examine collaboration between the faculty and student affairs respondents from the Art and Design Learning Community at Midwestern University. The profile of respondents gave a context to gaining a better understanding of the choices that they made as professionals and within the collaboration. The respondents' idea of the role of faculty and student affairs in academia revealed the understanding but not concise articulation of the role of the other. The Art and Design Learning Community's 'major players' as seen by the staff respondents was varied. One respondent believed that student and academic affairs were equals, while others felt that they were the major players in the program, another felt that students were the 'major players' within the learning community. But all the respondents felt that there was an instructional leader within the program whose leadership was at the center of the success of the program. All of the

respondents' views on the purpose of the program revealed that they share a similar commitment to the program.

There were challenges to the collaboration of student and academic affairs. The program was not designed totally for student affairs or faculty. As a result, both were somewhat out of their element and needed to find their own niche within the program. One faculty respondent felt that teaching in a learning community is a form of faculty development to serve to expose the faculty member to new ways of teaching. Although there are many valuable lessons to be learned, another faculty respondent implied that there must also be a balance between the intrinsic and extrinsic rewards.

Finally, the respondents advised others attempting a similar collaboration that they need to set clear and firm goals, include students in the discussion, make an informed commitment to the program and to ensure a smoother collaboration, and get to know colleagues on an informal level.

Consistent assessment is very central to the program. Assessment of the benefits for students was in place before the program began. The results show that students that participate in this program produce a greater number of positive outcomes than comparable Design students that do not participate; they are more likely to remain at Midwestern University, choose a concentration within Design and stay in it, and even get higher grades.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

Although the existence of collaborative relationships between student affairs and academic affairs is well documented in the literature, the feature of the *relationship* between them has not been well documented. The purpose of this study was to fill that gap in the literature and explore that relationship. This study found that both the faculty and student affairs specialists shared similar goals in terms of student success however, they had to work to find ways to jointly meet them. Also, this study found that unlike most of the literature, the key faculty member in this study fully appreciated the expertise of each member of the staff, including the student affairs specialists.

Arnold & Kuh (1999) suggested that many faculty members are not very concerned about what students do or learn outside the classroom is not germane to academic goals. Both faculty respondents in this study acknowledged the need and benefit of a program such as the Art and Design Learning Community. While it is not a formal academic program, it is a program that very directly supports the academic mission.

Although some of the literature states that an obstacle to collaboration between student affairs and academic affairs are their different personalities and viewpoints (Blake, 1996), another portion states that the different viewpoints provide a full and balanced educational experience for students (American Association for Higher Education, American College Personnel Association, and National Association for Student Personnel Administrators, 1998; Banta & Kuh, 1998;

Hutchings, 1996; Schroeder, Minor, & Tarkow, 1999b). David, as the Instructional Leader of the group, felt that one of the strengths of the program was that experts in various relevant areas of student life were present and able to give voice to their viewpoint and effect real change.

As in much of the research on collaboration between student affairs and academic affairs (de la Teja & Kramer, 1999; Gardiner, 1988; Ortiz & Langdon, 1997), this study also found that the faculty and student affairs respondents shared similar goals in terms of the purposes of the learning community and its benefits for students. The findings in this study reflected Charles Schroeder's (1999a) statement on collaboration between student affairs and academic affairs that "although collaboration is easy to extol, it is difficult to achieve" (p.1). There were definite challenges in the collaboration. Both the faculty and student affairs respondents were experts in their own fields. However, the learning community is a program that was neither totally designed directly from the Design curriculum, nor totally from student development topics. Brian and Susan in particular were challenged in how to achieve the best balance for themselves and for the benefit of students.

The student affairs respondents all cited the key faculty member as the main reason why they enjoy their position within the learning community. This could be due to the fact that David cited learning as his motivation and the center of what he does as a faculty member. This is a similar motivation for the student affairs specialists. The literature says that the underlying tension between faculty and student affairs may be due to differing viewpoints. The fact that the Instructional Leader shared the same goal and motivation of enhanced learning for students may

have been a factor in the positive work environment the student affairs specialists said they enjoyed.

Recommendations for Practice

On an administrative level, there should be a program in place to prepare faculty members for service in learning communities. Faculty members share similar goals with student affairs yet may, like David, benefit from a program that introduces them to that fact. Susan also mentioned that for faculty members to best participate in programs like learning communities, they should fully understand the program and their role in it. This type of program could include a program in the summer that introduces faculty to learning communities but also an on-going faculty development program.

Student affairs specialists are largely already sensitive to the special needs of students and the fact that their profession makes a significant contribution to student life. Many student affairs specialists are also aware that they play a complimentary role to academic affairs in the life of students. A program that discussed student affairs as it pertained to and benefited student life proved to be very useful to David in particular. He mentioned that it helped him become more aware as to how the mission of student affairs shared many of his concerns for student success. A program specifically for faculty members can provide a platform to comfortably ask questions and learn more about working with student affairs. A panel of faculty who have worked with student affairs specialists could be present to answer any questions, discuss their unique experiences, explain what they have learned in their

own development as a faculty member, and give advice to other faculty members who may want to begin collaboration with student affairs.

In addition, on-going programs should be available to faculty members to further advance their development in teaching methods that enhance student learning and development. Susan wanted to join the learning community because she believed it was a good idea. However, once in the position she realized that she could not necessarily teach and relate to students in a manner in which she was used to. Close, intimate, non-traditional contact with students such as those in learning communities may call for a different teaching style and working relationship with students. An on-going program for faculty members seeking to participate in collaborative programs like learning communities may provide them with the tools necessary to make the transition to a different teaching environment. This type of program can be very structured and discuss pre-specified topics. Or, it can be organized more loosely around what the specific group of faculty members wants to discuss and learn. For large, organized collaborative efforts, programs like these may be helpful in furthering the development of faculty members. These types of programs may be best organized through a Center for Teaching and Learning.

Tantamount to a successful collaboration is that the parties' involved get to know one another on a relational level. Brian felt that the time the staff spent together was invaluable in learning the epistemology and pedagogy that each other worked from. Time spent together learning each other's working style; expectations, hopes and even expertise can be useful while in pursuit of a shared goal. Meeting

regularly and frequently such as once a week to discuss and offer feedback on the collaborative program can also be beneficial.

Collaboration on a large scale like a learning community is very time consuming. Susan felt that the time that she needed to spend working in the learning community was not reflected in the small amount of credits that it was worth. The large amount of time spent in the learning community should be reflected in the faculty member's course load. Collaboration on a smaller scale may benefit from the student affairs specialist taking the initiative to get to know the faculty member on a relational level. David referred to collaboration as bringing the marriage between faculty and student affairs together again. If faculty members do not take the initiative to begin collaboration in every situation, perhaps Caple (1996) and Brian are right in the belief that student affairs specialists should be the first to step out to bridge that gap. When signs of problems such as tension, lack of respect and communication breakdown (Arnold & Kuh, 1999; Blake, 1996; McAuliffe, Huskey & Buchanan, 1988) are evident in the collaboration, both parties can either point the finger and wait for the other to come to them to solve the problem, or one side can take a risk and step over to the other side to get a better understanding of where that person is coming from and why they think they do instead of pushing their opinion as right. Listening and showing the other party genuine concern about understanding their point of view helps to get them to take a step toward mutual understanding. Once that gap is bridged, linkages and agreements are easier to make. Brian's experience as a student affairs specialist attempting to work more closely with faculty members gave him insight on the subject.

Faculty cannot simply be invited to an evening student outing and expected to attend and as a result effortlessly and eagerly begin to work with student affairs to better meet students' needs. Perhaps student affairs practitioners have to meet faculty where they are, learn their language, earn their trust to begin a work relationship. Brian's own words best illustrate this idea of how student affairs specialists can approach collaboration with faculty:

> I'm on this learning journey and I need you to walk with me and teach me what you know and I'd like to share too because there's this whole environment of learning that we have to get at and I'm a community member and I don't profess to know more than the next person and I don't say that they are this almighty God of Architecture and I bow down to them. I say we're walking next to each other. I'm not a good leader because I don't see everything you might see. And I'm not a good follower because I might not want to go that way. But if we walk next to each other we'll see a lot more and we'll help each other along. So that way I don't have to look back and wonder where you're at and you don't have to look back and wonder where I'm at. Because if we walk next to each other, I think that's an implication that in human terms we're equals but also too in a larger sense we're community members, I need to take something from the community, you need to take something from the community, but we're also bringing something to the community and so if we keep putting something in this well, I think there'll be plenty for others and ourselves to come and take something from it. So there's this "teach me, teach you" thing. It's working.

Recommendations for Future Study

This study did not focus on the influence of Peer Mentors on the collaboration or in the classroom. The Peer Mentors acted as 'middle management' and had the closest relationship with students and related their experiences and intimate knowledge of the students to the faculty and student affairs specialists. The Peer Mentors then were an integral part to the learning community. Peer Mentors lived on the same floor as the students, they had to continually be in contact with students, be aware of their concerns and interests, mediate if necessary and act as academic and social mentors for the students. These were often second to fourth year students who were still grappling with issues pertaining to being a student themselves; yet, they were in a position to help guide other students. A study should be conducted to discover the themes underlying this experience. A study on Peer Mentors may yield findings similar to a study on Residence Assistant (RA) positions. However, this position has a more academic emphasis and thus may yield different results.

Also, a study on student attitudes and perceptions of the benefits of the collaboration between faculty and student affairs can be beneficial. Although faculty and student affairs specialists may perceive their collaboration and roles in one way, students' perceptions may be totally different. A study of this sort may give insight to what students perceive their own needs to be and how faculty and student affairs meet them.

Finally, all is still not known about the collaborative relationships between student affairs and faculty. Therefore, future studies on a number of collaborative

relationships between faculty and student affairs should be conducted to yield results that are more transferable.

APPENDIX A: HUMAN SUBJECTS APPROVAL

Last name of Principal Investigator Joyner

Checklist for Attachments and Time Schedule

The following are attached (please check):

12. ☒ Letter or written statement to subjects indicating clearly:
    a) the purpose of the research
    b) the use of any identifier codes (names, #'s), how they will be used, and when they will be removed (see item 17)
    c) an estimate of time needed for participation in the research
    d) if applicable, the location of the research activity
    e) how you will ensure confidentiality
    f) in a longitudinal study, when and how you will contact subjects later
    g) that participation is voluntary; nonparticipation will not affect evaluations of the subject

13. ☒ Signed consent form (if applicable)

14. ☒ Letter of approval for research from cooperating organizations or institutions (if applicable)

15. ☒ Data-gathering instruments

16. Anticipated dates for contact with subjects:

First contact	**Last contact**
1/10/00 (or upon approval of POS and the Human Subjects Review Committee)	11/30/00
Month/Day/Year	Month/Day/Year

17. If applicable: anticipated date that identifiers will be removed from completed survey instruments and/or audio or visual tapes will be erased:

2/30/01
Month/Day/Year

18. Signature of Departmental Executive Officer | Date | Department or Administrative Unit

John A. Schu | 12/15/99 | Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

19. Decision of the University Human Subjects Review Committee:
☐ Project approved ☐ Project not approved ☐ No action required

Name of Human Subjects in Research Committee Chair | Date | Signature of Committee Chair

Patricia M. Keith

APPENDIX B: LETTER TO RESPONDENTS

Dear [Staff Name],

My name is Angela Joyner and I am a candidate for the Masters degree in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies here at Iowa State University. I am conducting a study that will explore the attributes of the collaborative efforts of academic and student affairs personnel. I am interested in obtaining your perceptions' of your experiences as it relates to the Art and Design Learning Community, the backdrop in which the collaboration takes place.

The Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at Iowa State University supports the protection of human subjects participating in research studies. The following consent form is provided so that you can decide whether you wish to participate in this study which is the basis of my masters' thesis.

Please feel free to contact me at ajoyner@iastate.edu or (515) 292-4836 if you have any questions regarding this research or your participation once you have carefully read this letter and the consent form. I will call you soon to find out if you are interested.

Thank you in advance,

_____

Angela M. Joyner
Candidate, Masters of Science in Education
Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORM

Academic and Student Affairs Personnel Consent Form
"An Exploratory Study of Collaboration Between Academic and Student Affairs Personnel in a Learning Community in the College"
Angela Joyner

You are invited to participate in a qualitative study undertaken to generate data for the researcher's Master's thesis. The following information is provided so that you can decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. The purpose of this study is to explore the attributes of the collaborative efforts of academic and student affairs personnel. I am interested in obtaining student, academic unit and student affairs personnel perceptions of the factors that contribute to the success of the Design College Learning Community. This will enable me to better understand how the collaboration between academic and student affairs personnel fostered this student learning experience.

I will attend and observe class activities, observe Design Team meetings and other activities in which collaboration takes place. Also, between 2-4 hour-long (or longer should you choose so) individual and/or focus group interviews will take place. I will preserve any documentation given to me concerning the learning community and the collaboration. In addition, any researcher notes from observations will be kept secure. With permission, I will use the real names of the academic and student affairs personnel. Otherwise, job titles will be used. Data collection for this study will take place during the fall and spring semesters of 1999-2000 in the Art and Design Learning Community Learning Community. You will be asked to provide feedback on my developing analysis of the information I gather.

There are no anticipated physical, economic or legal risks or discomforts. However, the potential exists for experiencing the satisfaction and/or discomfort that sometimes accompanies the sharing of personal feelings and information pertaining to working relationships. Your participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time or decline to participate in certain portions of the study. If you withdraw, I will destroy the transcripts and fieldnotes of your data or give these documents to you. Nonparticipation will not affect evaluations of the subject.

Please feel free to contact me at ajoyner@iastate.edu or (515) 292-4836 if you have any questions regarding this research or your participation. I will call you soon to follow-up on your decision.

I consent to participate in the research study named and described above.

Signature:_____ Date:_____

Researcher Signature:_____ Date:_____

APPENDIX D: SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Can you describe to me your professional, personal and academic experiences that brought you to this pointing your profession?
2. What is your teaching/professional philosophy (values, tenets) for working with students?
3. How would you describe yourself and the part you play in the Art and Design Learning Community? Thinking of the Art and Design Learning Community as a play,
    A) Who would you describe as the major characters?
    B) What are their roles?
    C) What does each contribute to the plot and purpose?
4. What do you see as the role of Student Affairs in Higher Education? Of Faculty?
5. What do you believe is the major purpose of the Art and Design Learning Community?
6. Were there any "rough edges" in the collaboration that needed to be smoothed out? How were they worked through?
7. What advice would you give to other faculty and student affairs specialists as they attempt similar collaboration?

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